Luther on the Eve of His Revolt

BY

The Very Rev. M. J. LAGRANGE, O. P.

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A criticism of Luther's Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans given at Wittenberg in 1515–1516.

BY

The Very Rev. M. J. LAGRANGE, O. P.

Editor of the *Revue Biblique*,
Director of the *Ecole Pratique d'Etudes Bibliques*, Jerusalem.

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LUTHER ON THE EVE OF HIS REVOLT

INTRODUCTION

The official birthday of the Reformation has been fixed as the 31st of October, 1517, the day Luther posted upon the door of the University Church at Wittenberg the ninety-five theses in which he bade defiance to preachers of indulgences in Germany. It was resolved, before the war into which Europe has been plunged, to celebrate with great solemnity the four hundredth anniversary of this event.

The view that Luther's challenge had great significance was held by Bossuet. That incomparable controversialist did not see in Luther's action more than a rather irresolute first step, a denunciation of an isolated abuse: "From abuses he passed to the thing itself." The Lutheran system would have grown only insensibly and according to the requirements of controversy: "However, one matter led him to another. As the doctrine of justification and of the efficacy of the Sacraments was closely connected with that of indulgences, Luther turned upon these two articles; and this controversy soon became the more im-

portant."[1] Working on this assumption, Bossuet undertakes the difficult task of following Luther in his first movements, which he represents as sometimes bold, sometimes timid. His admirable book, so full of facts, so vigorous and serene in its reasoning, is, at the beginning, occupied with the discussion of petty quarrels. It is like the first flappings of the wings of the eagle which is starting upon its flight.

It has been shown recently that Bossuet's view about the beginnings of Lutheranism was entirely wrong. Long before the incident of October 31, 1517, Luther was already in full possession of his theological system. If all the details were not formulated, the principles had been laid down clearly and with assurance. The monk had his doctrine and his plan of reform. It is now clear that the new religion is not the result of circumstances.

The first historian to understand and to analyze the state of mind of Luther on the eve of the Reformation was an Austrian Dominican, Father Denifle, in his study on the beginnings of Lutheranism, as they are seen in the original documents.[2]

[1] *Histoire des Variations des Eglises Protestantes*, Book 1.

[2] *Luther und Luthertum in der ersten Entwickelung quellenmässig dargestellt.*

The first part of this work was revised by the author himself (1904). The second appeared after

The document which proved to be of most value was a manuscript of the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* which Luther, as professor of exegesis at Wittenberg, had composed in 1515-1516. We have the precise date, because the Vulgate text of the Epistle which he annotated was printed in 1515, and we know that the lectures ended in October, 1516, just one year before the publication of the theses on indulgences. We owe the discovery of this important document to Mr. Johannes Ficker, who, in his search for manuscripts bearing on the beginning of the Reformation, found, first, a copy of the *Commentary* in the archives of the Vatican Library at Rome, and then the original itself, in the handwriting of Luther, carefully preserved—unread—in a glass case of the Royal Library of Berlin. German Protestants, who have raised to the glory of the Reformer a veritable monument of books and pamphlets, had overlooked the only absolutely reliable source of information concerning the thought of Luther when that thought was ripening into Lutheranism. Was such an oversight due to the fact that intellectual curiosity about the master's activity as a

his death (June 10, 1905), edited by Father Weiss, O. P. (1906). Circumstances having prevented access to the original, we shall cite from the French translation, enriched by careful notes, of the Rev. J. Paquier, LL.D., *Luther et le Lutheranisme*, Paris, Picard, 4 vols., 1910-1913.

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monk had been satisfied by his own stories about his life in the cloister? Did they take seriously his claim to be divinely inspired? The details of Ficker's discovery are given, too sparingly, in his edition of the Berlin manuscript,[1] from which we shall quote in the present study.

Father Denifle was not the man to await the publication of the Berlin text. With his incomparable mastery of paleography, he set to work with the Roman copy. He realized at a glance the importance of the discovery of this book and it was not hard for such a keen theologian and historian, so admirably informed concerning the intellectual life of the Middle Ages, to realize that there was in this *Commentary* the essence of all the errors which Luther was afterward to profess. Variations might appear, called forth by polemics, but they would not fundamentally alter the system which the Augustinian monk expounded a year before his revolt. The long extracts which Father Denifle gives from the *Commentary*, and the rigorous analysis to which he submits them, are the most interesting features of his great work on Luther and Lutheranism.

This work has shown conclusively, as is

[1] *Anfänge reformatorischer Bibelauslegung, herausgeben von Johannes Ficker.* 1. Band: *Luther's Vorlesung über den Römerbrief*, 1515-1516. I Teil: *Die Glosse*, in 8° CIV—161 pp. II Teil: *Die Scholien*, 1-346 pp., Leipzig, 1908.

conceded by more than one of the many opponents Father Denifle stirred up, that Luther, when he made his attack on Catholic theology, had no knowledge of the great scholastics, including St. Thomas Aquinas. His theological reading had not extended beyond the disciples of Occam; Gabriel Biel had been his most familiar author.

A second still more important point made by the clear-sighted Thomistic theologian is that Occam exercised an influence over the dominant theory of Luther.

Protestant theologians were rather dumbfounded by the revelations which Father Denifle had made, thanks to his knowledge of the theology, the mysticism, and the liturgy of the Middle Ages. They had found it convenient to make real Christianity begin with Luther, as a Jacobin might date the history of France from the Revolution. The facts were too clear to be gainsaid. Luther's mental equipment as a reformer was poor; even as a heretic he was not so original as people had thought. So much might be granted. But when Father Denifle passed on to discuss the moral condition of Luther at the time that he was elaborating his theological system, he ceased to convince Protestants. He had laid about with a scourge of thistles among the contradictions of the theologian and, having followed the movements of his mind up to the moment when he

deviated from Catholic teaching, he ventured to assign as the real cause of this deviation the infidelities of the father of the Reformation; if Luther believed concupiscence invincible, it was because he had himself, and frequently, given way to concupiscence. A clamor of Lutheran apologists broke out against the unmerciful treatment which the mendicant friar had meted out to the apostate monk. Denifle's verdict was denounced as a calumny. Harnack was as excited as the rest, although he spoke with caution. Father Denifle had called attention to what might seem insufficient concern about truth in some of the statements of this renowned historian in his work on Luther. Whatever may be thought of the correctness of Father Denifle's judgment about the moral dispositions of the father of Protestantism, this judgment did not bear on a matter which could be made so clear as Luther's state of mind. It has not found support in the more recent work of another Catholic scholar, Father Grisar, S.J., who has dealt with the question in the course of his exhaustive studies on Luther.[1] He declares that "neither the *Commentary* on the Psalms nor that on the Epistle to the Romans gives the impression that the author was morally corrupt." [2] Consequently, he

[1] *Luther*, by Hartmann Grisar, S.J., Freiburg im Breisgau, B. Herder, 1911 ff.. English translation, by E. M. Lamond, in 5 vols., B. Herder, completed in 1917. [2] Op. cit., I., p. 91.

has not sought for the origin of Luther's theories in his moral perversity.

In the following study of the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, I shall keep this psychological problem in view. Everybody admits that Luther's personality was a considerable factor in his exegesis. Some of his admirers recognize with naïve satisfaction this influence of the dispositions of his mind and heart, without seeming to know that to be guided in interpreting another's mind by one's own prepossessions and feelings, means to depart from truth. But while we endeavor to determine to what extent Luther was thus misled in his understanding of the teaching of St. Paul, we must inquire no less carefully to what extent St. Paul influenced Luther. For Luther really thought that he understood the Apostle; he was convinced, at least in the beginning, that his system was grounded on the Bible. It would be a mistake to think that he simply read into the Epistle to the Romans a system of thought formed without any dependence on the Apostle.

Before entering upon this study of the relation between the text of Romans and the Lutheran way of understanding it, of the state of soul and the exegetical methods which in part account for Luther's interpretation, it is of interest to note that a cursory reading of the *Commentary* makes it clear that

the idea of revolt had not yet entered his thoughts. He still believed himself loyal to the Catholic Church. He purposed only to bring religion back to its purest sources. It did not occur to him that he would ever be reduced to seeking salvation outside the Church. No book, even in the Middle Ages, more frequently denounces heresy or paints heresy in darker colors than does the *Commentary*. It represents the heretic as a proud man, who sins first through ignorance. If contempt be mingled with ignorance, he is in the net. Then he clings to what seems true to his own private judgment; and at the moment when he thinks himself sure of the truth, freed from snares and pitfalls, he is really a captive. Next, he becomes impatient of contradiction, and will listen to nothing. Finally, he is seized with indignant zeal for his own inventions; he pursues and calumniates his enemies, seeking to harm them. His punishment has been already inflicted! The *Commentary* tells us, moreover, that, whatever heretics may do, there is always a weak spot which allows one to unmask them. You have only to ask whence they hold their mission. That is a death blow. They can allege neither prophesy nor miracles. Mindful of this need of proper authorization, the Wittenberg professor is careful to shield himself behind his title: if he teaches, it is by apostolic commission. This gives him an

apostolic authority and a right to blame all that is evil, even in the most exalted.

We propose here, firstly, to consider Luther's *Commentary* merely as an exegetical work, restricting ourselves to an examination of his method, and reserving until later any formal discussion of the new doctrines; secondly, to study the intellectual and moral dispositions of Luther, in so far as they may be gathered from his work on this Epistle to the Romans; thirdly, to indicate the new doctrine which the Wittenberg professor so dogmatically gave out as the genuine teaching of St. Paul, and to discuss its real relation to that teaching.

The exegesis of Luther in his lectures at the University of Wittenberg in 1515-1516 deserves study for many reasons. Foremost, it was destined to transform the religious lives of millions. Henceforth, the teaching of St. Paul as interpreted by the Augustinian professor was to become the rule of faith and practice of a large portion of the Christian world. And it still holds sway. Many Protestants admit, indeed, that while professing to interpret St. Paul, Luther simply set forth his own ideas. About the ideas themselves they care little; they are as independent in his regard as he would have them to be in regard to the teaching which was traditional in 1516. There are, however, a great many Protestants who still regard Luther as a faithful expositor of the Apostle's doctrine.

Some even, like Mr. A. Jundt,[1] exalt his exegetical fidelity to the prejudice of his originality: "St. Paul, Augustin, Calvin, have created theological systems, Luther has restored Pauline theology; his mind, attuned to that of the Apostle, acquired dogmatic precision of thought once he understood what St. Paul means in the Epistle to the Romans." Luther's system of thought possesses more than an archeological interest for the student of history of Bible interpretation.

We are fully aware, of course, that a Catholic who criticizes the giant of the Reformation can expect only disdain from Protestants. Father Denifle has recalled that many who feel perfectly free to dissect the words and actions of Jesus will not suffer any disparagement of the inviolable Luther. We are incapable, it is claimed, of understanding him. The cavilling of modern dwarfs can no more reach him than the envy of a mole-hill could efface Mount Blanc. We need not, then, be embarrassed, since we do the idol no harm. Besides, we are conscious of only seeking the truth.

[1] *Le développement de la pensée religieuse de Luther jusqu'en 1517.* Paris, 1908.

CHAPTER I

LUTHER'S COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS AS AN EXEGETICAL WORK

1. The Structure of the Commentary

The text of Luther's *Commentary*, as published by Johannes Ficker, is, naturally, according to the original of Berlin, with notation of variants in the Vatican copy, which differs very slightly from the text. The first volume is consecrated to the *Glosses*, the second to the *Scholia*. The work of Luther comprises, indeed, two very distinct parts.

He used, for the first of these parts, a printed text of the Epistle to the Romans according to the Vulgate, with considerable space between the lines. This space is devoted to a first series of *Glosses* which were only another way of expressing the idea of the sacred writer. Sometimes a word is substituted for another in an endeavor to get nearer the meaning of the Greek, sometimes several words are paraphrased or explained. These annotations are for the most part brief indications of consequences to be drawn from a text. In the edition of Ficker the text of the Bible is printed in heavy (Egyptian) characters, and the gloss follows in Italic.

The following translation will give an idea of the book:

Romans 1.28: And as they did not approve, *make efforts, or diligently strive* **to have God in their knowledge,** *that their heart might not be darkened, the knowledge of God being lost. This, I say, they did not care about, therefore* **God delivered them up** *to a worthy chastisement, by a just judgment,* **to a reprobate sense,** *a dishonest mind, etc.*

Other glosses were placed in the margin. They are by way of development of the former, explaining more in detail the meaning of the Greek text, or the thought of the Apostle, and at times they contain citations, etc. In Ficker these glosses are assigned a place by themselves, under the others, with indication of the texts to which they refer.

The text, together with interlinear and marginal glosses, occupies only 28 pages in quarto, whereas the *Scholia* extend from p. 29 to p. 152 of the manuscript. The *Scholia* form a continuous commentary, if the name can be given to such an original work. Some words of the text are still quoted, but digressions are not rare. It is in the *Scholia* that we find the developments which refer to the new doctrine. The glosses reflect it also, but less clearly, either because Luther was naturally led to write these short notes in the terminology of traditional exegesis, or because the text of St. Paul itself served as a

barrier. The new ideas are freely set forth only in the *Scholia.*

2. Neglect of the Fathers and the Schoolmen

It is in these *Scholia* that it would have been well to determine the logical connection of the Apostle's thought. The system of St. Thomas is known: he reproduces the Latin text of a pericope; then he dismembers it, so to speak, to point out the order of the propositions, the relations of causality, finality, or consequence. After this he goes on to examine the propositions, endeavoring solely to disengage their meaning. He willingly notes the various solutions which may be given, and sets down analogous biblical passages. This commentary of St. Thomas would be a model of an objective explanation, if such could be produced without having recourse to the original text, and if one might interpret a book without studying its environment, the origin and conflict of doctrines—without applying all that we call historical exegesis.

St. Thomas has at least the merit of keeping his own personality in the background. Father Denifle shows us how impersonal this method was. "If we compare," he writes in a sort of supplement to his work on Luther,[1]

[1] *Quellenbelege. Die abländischen Schriftsausleger bis Luther über* Justitia Dei (Rom. 1.17), *und* Justificatio (1905), p. 136.

"the Commentary of St. Thomas with those which immediately preceded it,[1] we find in these earlier ones, to speak in a general way, the same questions, often the same solutions, the same scriptural texts, although more numerous; but in the commentary of St. Thomas, as in his *Summa*, everything is handled with more perspicuity, is better understood, is grasped in a surer and more objective way. He did not, however, invent his method; he only employed logically the traditional way of expounding Scripture."

All the works of the scholastic exegetes remained almost unknown to Luther.[2] He has, indeed, a few allusions to Peter Lombard, and Mr. Ficker has expressed the view that he had under his eyes a Latin Vulgate containing the divisions of St. Thomas; but his contempt for scholasticism, which led him to an open rupture with the system, kept him from consulting, except perhaps very rarely, the exegetes of the Middle Ages.

[1] Father Denifle cites in the preceding pages the Dominicans Guerric of St. Quentin, Odo Gallus (?), Gaufrid of Bleveio, and the Franciscan John of la Rochelle.

[2] Hugh of St. Victor is cited textually, but the passage is not found in his works (F. 312). It is the same with a quotation from Seneca (F. 74), and one from Cicero, who even says the contrary of what is in the citation (F. 35).

The references indicated by F. with a number are to the pages of the volume containing the *Scholia*, the more important. F.g. will indicate the volume of Ficker which contains the glosses.

This neglect was unfortunate, for, although the schoolmen went too far in their concern for logical order, bringing it into St. Paul to such an extent as to reduce his utterances to a series of well-drawn conclusions, they could at least have taught Luther to inform himself about the plan of the Apostle, perfectly recognizable in its main lines in spite of the almost tumultuous appearance of his style.

In his scorn for scholasticism did the Augustinian monk prefer to go directly to the Fathers? The influence of St. Augustine is evident. Luther has told us what an impression was made upon him by the *De spiritu et littera*. This might be recognized by simply reading his work. The books against Julian, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* and others, furnish him with quotations and veritable extracts. We shall have to inquire how far he really reproduced the thought of one whom he regarded as the founder of his order, and to whom he had consecrated so much and such exclusive admiration. St. Ambrose is named ten times, twice without any special reason,[1] once following Erasmus,[2] four times following St. Augustine;[3] and, let us add, a citation which is rather inaccurate [4] and one which Luther probably borrowed from a citation of another.[5] In the single passage

[1] F. 108, 278.
[2] F.g. 126.
[3] F. 116; 168; 169; g. 69.
[4] F. 109.
[5] F. 28.

where Ambrose is quoted as a commentator, reference is made to the distinguished work which we call, for want of a better name, the *Ambrosiaster*. Luther knew it, consequently, but he did not make much use of it. St. Cyprian is named three times, always following St. Augustine. Chrysostom himself is not otherwise cited. This is fortunate for him, because he would surely have been rudely handled. St. Jerome was better known, but especially as the translator of the Old Testament.

Luther was not obliged to display in his *Commentary* wide acquaintance with the opinions of the Fathers, but he should at least have avoided incorrect general statements about writings which he had not read. He frequently misrepresents them. For instance, on the words of the text: "Let every man abound in his own sense," Luther writes:

> This saying is taken everywhere (passim) by the Holy Fathers and Doctors for a general declaration, by which every man is allowed to abound in his own sense in the understanding of the Scriptures.[1]

Concerning this statement Mr. Ficker notes that the exegesis of Romans 14.5 is met with neither in the Fathers nor in the Scholastics.

When the *Commentary* speaks of "the

[1] F. 325.

Fathers," one can be sure that Luther has in mind hardly any one but St. Augustine, in whom the Augustinian monk hears the whole school. It is again Mr. Ficker himself who has noticed this.[1] It is, then, rather to ignorance than to bad faith that we may attribute Luther's allegation about the traditional interpretation of Romans 1.17, so severely judged by Father Denifle, upon whom it imposed enormous researches.[2]

Luther had accustomed himself to put down as an "opinion of the Fathers" any view which in his own neighborhood was regarded as traditional.

However, he had direct knowledge of St. Bernard, whose authority he willingly alleged alongside that of St. Augustine. Once he even attributes to Augustine an idea which was suggested by Bernard.[3] And he grafts upon his words a whole theory.[4] But it is as an ascetic Doctor much more than as an

[1] F. 144, on line 19: "Luther means here as elsewhere by the ancient Fathers especially St. Augustine." The passage which calls for this note is characteristic:

Consequently as the ancient Fathers have rightly said: That sin of origin is the fuel (*fomes*), the law of the flesh (*lex carnis*), the law of the members (*lex membrorum*), the weakness of nature (*languorem nature*), the tyrant, the sickness of origin (*tyrannus, morbus originis*), etc.

[2] The whole volume of *Quellenbelege.*

[3] F. 201.

[4] F. 197.

exegete that Bernard is cited; only one gloss is borrowed from him.[1]

If now we return to more recent commentators, we find Luther making use of the *Ordinary* and of the *Interlineary* glossaries current in his time.[2] These he had habitually under his eyes. He also used Nicholas de Lyra, quoted oftener when he parts company with him in his interpretation than when they agree. Paul of Burgos is named several times.

3. Dependence on the Humanists Lefèvre d'Etaples, Erasmus, and Reuchlin

Luther himself has defined the attitude which he intended to assume in the explanation of the word of God, for we may apply to his whole method what he says of one passage (Romans 1.3–4):

I do not know whether this passage has been really and truly expounded by anyone. The ancients were prevented from doing so by the

[1] F.g. 17; 33.

[2] The *Ordinary Glossary* (*Glossa Ordinaria*) was a compilation of explanations of scriptural words and ideas which were current during the Middle Ages and down to Luther's time. It is usually attributed to Walafrid Strabo, Abbot of Reichenau, who died at the court of Charles the Bald, July 17, 849. The *Interlinear Glossary* (*Glossa Interlinearis*), by Anselm of Laon (+ 1117), explained the meaning of words between the lines of the Bible.

incorrectness of the translation, the more recent commentators, by the absence of the spirit.[1]

A concise formula, but strong and expressive, such as occur frequently under his pen. He believed, then, with the most enlightened minds of his time, that the moment had come for exegetes to define with more precision the meaning of words. For this recourse must be had to the original text. Illustrious humanists had opened the way in the case of the Greek New Testament. Luther, so independent in regard to the Scholastics, does not hesitate to accept the moderns as his real authorities. For everything pertaining to the sense of the Greek he depends on Lefèvre d'Etaples. The first edition of the *Epistole Pauli Apostoli* had appeared in Paris in the year 1512. Luther never disputed d'Etaples' authority as a Hellenist until the day a more luminous star came within the ken of Wittenberg. The *Novum Testamentum* of Erasmus appeared at Basle only in 1516, but Luther already uses it after his ninth chapter. Henceforth Erasmus is the master for Greek and references to the Greek text become more and more frequent in the glosses, while allusions to the religious and political conditions of the times

1 F. 9: Iste locus nescio si ab ullo sit vere et recte expositus. Antiquis obstitit interpretationis improprietas, recentioribus vero absentia spiritus.

are multiplied in the *Scholia.* The mendicant monk entered at the same time into the current of humanism and into Erasmus' aspirations for reform. It is even probable (Ficker infers it from the handwriting [1]) that more than one philological note was added in the margin to the first part of the *Commentary* after Erasmus had appeared.

But Erasmus was already [2] for Luther what he so loudly declared him to be in their controversy on free will, a profane and superficial humanist, little concerned about the things of God. If the new exegesis had "correctness of translation" (proprietas verborum), there was lacking to it the *spirit* of the ancients, by which Luther meant especially the doctrine of Augustine, the faithful interpreter of the Holy Spirit, who had spoken by the mouth of Paul.

Whence we may conclude that his ideal was to compose a commentary which should be above reproach as regards the explanation of the Greek but nevertheless penetrated by the spirit which had animated the Apostle. So we shall see him consciously depart from the literal sense under the influence of the view that the meaning of Paul can only be attained by those who are "in spirit."

[1] F. 21.

[2] Letter to Spalatin, of Oct. 19, 1516, where he differs from Erasmus regarding the sense of St. Paul; letter to Lang of March 1, 1517.

The solution is: because the Apostle speaks in spirit, he is not understood except by those who are in spirit.[1]

Luther was well inspired in accepting the authority of the humanists. His competency in Greek was at the time very mediocre. He learned it only later on from Melanchthon and he always remained far inferior to Erasmus in regard to the understanding of words. It is true that Erasmus' philological tact was wonderful.

It would be a loss of time to point out here the cases, more and more numerous, in which Luther translates according to the Greek, frequently insisting on its difference from the Vulgate. Mr. Ficker has taken care in such cases to note the translation of Lefèvre and that of Erasmus. Luther always respected their authority. Towards the end of his *Commentary*, after having defended at length his view on the meaning of φιλουτιμούμενος (Rom. 15.20), which he translates *ambitiosus* with Lefèvre against Erasmus, he is careful to make a concession to the authority of the great humanist.[2] His tone is here very far from the disdain which he shows for theologians. He doubtless realized his linguistic inferiority.

1 F. 66.

2 F. 345: But let us not condemn the judgment of Erasmus and of those like him.

And, indeed, his personal contribution does not equal even that of Lefèvre, not to speak of Erasmus. The former had translated Romans 42.4: *de filio suo . . . definito filio Dei in potestate . . . Jhesu Christo domino nostro.* Luther translates ὁρισθέντος, *destinato sive definito, declarato, ordinato,* etc., without seeming to attach much importance to the varieties of meaning which these words represent.[1] He hesitates to replace *Jhesu Christi Domini nostri* by the ablative on the ground that the Greek text is equivocal.[2] However, he is right in retaining [3] *secundum spiritum sanctificationis,* which Lefèvre had translated *per spiritum sanctitatis.*

One does not see why he replaced *in die* (Rom. 2.5) by *in diem;* he notes *Greci, in diem, et melius,*[4] but no authority, Greek or Latin, known to us, can have suggested this.

The Latin text *credita sunt . . . eloquia Dei* (Rom. 3.2), like the Greek ἐπιστεύθωσαν, signifies that the word of God has been entrusted to the Jews. Perhaps on account of his preoccupation concerning the rôle of faith, Luther understands the text to mean that the Jews had believed the word of God.[5] Nevertheless, he puts aside the read-

[1] F. 9.
[2] F. 11. Graecus textus non potest esse certus.
[3] With Valla, F. 9, note 22.
[4] F. 17.
[5] Mr. Ficker notes that this interpretation and his preference for the neuter comes from the com-

ing *ab illis*, which would lead to this confusion, and retains only *credita sunt eloquia Dei.*

Another still stranger confusion. In the famous text on Original Sin (Rom. 5.12) *in quo* is glossed *peccato originali*, and this sense is maintained in the *Scholia: Sed nullum aliud est, in quo omnes peccaverunt, proprium peccatum, sed unusquisque in suo peccato.*[1] Is it that Luther has neglected to consult the Greek text of this important passage? He would not have understood ἐφ' ᾧ of sin, which is feminine (ἁμαρτία). But he has expressed himself further on concerning this *in quo:*

> This is ambiguous in Greek, whether masculine or neuter.[2] Therefore, it seems that the Apostle wished it understood in both senses.

Consequently a double literal sense, commented on by St. Augustine. Luther holds decidedly to the neuter. The authority of St. Augustine dispenses him from a deeper study of the Greek.

This same authority prevented him from noticing a remark of Lefèvre on the meaning of κατεργάζεσθαι (Rom. 7.18), which is

mentary of Lefèvre; but may it not be that Lefèvre understood ἐφ' ᾧ to mean *eo quod* (because)? where Luther says clearly *in quo peccato* (in which sin).

1 F. 61. Credita, i. e., per fidem suscepta.

2 F.g. 48; 142.

not *perficere* (to perfect), but simply *operari* (to do). But it would have been necessary to give up the doctrinal opposition between *facere* and *perficere*,[1] favorable to his thesis, as we shall see. I cannot blame him for having confirmed the meaning of *perficere* in Romans 7.18 by Galatians 5.16, where the Greek has another verb,[2] since he is in this place [3] but following St. Augustine.

Father Denifle [4] also appears to me too severe when he condemns the exegesis of *ego ipse* (I myself) in Romans 7.25:

> I, he says, the whole man, the same person, serve in both services.[5]

Luther should have consulted the Greek text (αὐτος ἐγώ), which authorizes the explanation: "If alone, if left to myself." St. Augustine and St. Thomas (unus et idem)[6] are guilty of the same neglect. In reality, both explanations are, perhaps, equally probable. Needless to say, St. Augustine in no wise authorizes Luther to conclude: *Simul justus est et peccat* (While just he sins).

[1] Denifle-Paquier, III., p. 107, N. 1; F. 171.
[2] Non perficietis.
[3] F. 182.
[4] Denifle-Paquier, III., 107 f.
[5] F. 176: ego, inquit, totus homo, persona eadem, servio utranque servitutem.
[6] This particular point has no influence on the determination of the general theme, whether it be question of the regenerate man or the unregenerate.

On the other hand, Father Denifle is right in censuring Luther—as Melanchthon did before him—for treating the statement about faith in Hebrews 11.1 as if "substantia futurarum rerum" (the substance of things future) meant the possession of, and power of using, future things: *possessio et facultas futurarum rerum.*[1]

We again find in the Commentary on Romans 8.35 St. Augustine opposed to Lefèvre in express terms, this time in a case where the latter is on the right side; the love of Christ is indeed that which He has for us, active and not passive. In other cases Lefèvre has proved unreliable as a guide. *Abba ho pater* (Rom. 8.15) is transcribed in Latin and made equivalent to *Abba, quod est pater*,[2] as if the article represented the relative. Of the two readings (Rom. 9.10): *Isaac, patre nostro* and *Isaac patris nostri*, the first is better. Luther prefers the second with Lefèvre against Erasmus, whose influence is about to begin.[3]

Nevertheless, it doubtless would be unjust to judge of his knowledge of Greek by the translation of φίλος by *amor*, which came down to him from the exegesis of the Middle Ages.[4]

Taking it all in all, Luther made a judicious use of the humanists. Father Denifle

[1] Denifle-Paquier, III., 108; F. 235.
[2] F.g. 73. [3] F. 222. [4] F. 284.

complains, without giving definite cases, that he sounds the trumpet when the Greek text seems to favor him.[1]

These cases are assuredly not very frequent. Here are two. In his interlinear gloss Luther has the certainly correct translation: *quod enim mortuus est* (Rom. 6.4), but in the marginal gloss:

> "In greco habetur: quod enim mortuum est peccato, mortuum est semel" et multo melius. "Quod autem vivit, vivit Deo." Quod, i. e., quodcunque, pronominaliter, non conjunctionaliter.

And he reproaches the translator with going outside his rôle to give exegesis:

> There is no greater vice in a translator, because he imparts to others his own idea, which is not in him whom he translates.[2]

He is surely in good faith; he does not suspect, then, that he himself adds to the text, or rather inflicts upon it an interpretation contrary to the mind of the writer in the interest of his thesis, namely, that sin truly dies only at the threshold of eternal life:

> Nor can he again die to sin, who has once died to sin, for there has followed upon it eternal justice, which nevermore sins.[3]

[1] Denifle-Paquier, III., 107.
[2] F.g. 55.
[3] F. 158.

Another case where prepossession is not less evident. The Greek γενέσθω δέ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής (Rom. 3.4) has been translated in the Vulgate, *Est autem Deus verax.* It was impossible to translate *fiat*, because Paul meant in the logical sense: let it then be well understood that God is truthful. This is what Lefèvre has well seen in rendering *esto.* Luther follows him, but treats the verb as a real imperative and connects with it the scriptural text which follows:

> That this is to be taken in an imperative sense is proved by the authority which he alleges.[1] . . . As it is written, that is to say that we must believe in him, because to be justified is to believe, as will be said below.[2]

However, this tendency to seek for his doctrine in the original texts is much more apparent in his elucubrations on the Hebrew.

In dealing with the Bible, Greek was not alone to be considered. It was necessary to go back to the language of the Old Testament. This was not without interest even for the Epistle to the Romans, which cites so many passages of Moses and the Prophets. In this domain, too, a revolution was going on, and the conflict between the Dominicans of Cologne and Reuchlin marks its inception. Luther had all the more sympathy with the Hebrew scholar that he thought he could get

[1] F. 52. [2] F. 63 f.

from him support for some points of his doctrine. We are obliged to insist on his mistakes, which go even beyond those of Reuchlin.

Here is an example connected with justification. When we recognize God's justice, He is justified for us; it is, on our part, an act of faith, which He reckons unto us for righteousness. At the same time, then, that He is justified, He justifies. And this double operation is altogether conformable to the double state of the Scripture, passive in Greek and Latin, *ut justificeris*, active in Hebrew. This is said in express terms:

Thus it is in agreement with the Hebrew,[1] which has: "I have sinned against thee, therefore thou shalt justify," that is, work justification, "by thy word and cleanse when thou judgest." Consequently, when justified He justifies, and when He justifies He is justified. Wherefore the same is expressed by the active verb in Hebrew and by the passive in our translation.[2]

This astonishing argument is baseless, since the Hebrew text of Psalm 50 (51).6 has the passive as well as the Greek: "That thou mayest be recognized just in thy sentence, and clear from reproach in thy judgment."

[1] Ficker refers to Reuchlin, *Septem psalmi poenitentiales hebraice cum grammatica tralacione latina*, 1512. [2] F. 65.

At times Luther has recourse to the Septuagint which Augustine may have led him to regard as an inspired translation. For instance, he notes that no one is exempt from concupiscence, "not even a child of one day," a reference to Job 14.4 according to the Septuagint.[1]

But the Hebrew serves Luther above all to establish imputative justice. Here again Reuchlin furnishes him with a translation, very literal in appearance, on which he engrafts a very fantastic interpretation.

As an example we may cite the following commentary on Psalms 32.1-2: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin":

"Blessed (that is, it is well with him), who becomes unburdened," that is, who by grace is made free from the load of crime, namely, the actual sin which he has committed. But this is not enough; there must be at the same time "a covering for sin," that is, his radical evil must not be imputed as sin. It is then passed by when it exists indeed, but is not seen, not observed, not imputed. . . . Blessed the man, the Lord will not impute unto him his iniquity.[2]

Luther pretends very seriously that the Hebrew constantly maintains this distinc-

[1] F. 107. The reference has escaped Mr. Ficker.
[2] F. 113.

tion between actual and original sin. If it is not recognized, it is the fault of the Vulgate:

> These differences are always kept in the Hebrew, but the translation lacks precision and everything is consequently very confused.[1]

He goes on to maintain without blinking that *Pescha* signifies actual sin, *Hattaa* original sin, *Aon* the absence of righteousness, *Rascha* impiety or the vice of pride, the setting up of one's own righteousness.[2]

It may be that Luther was under the spell of the word "to impute"; but if he was, he did not delay to exert upon the text the influence of his own ideas. It is useless to prove that his nice defining of the meaning of Hebrew terms is arbitrary and false.

When not preoccupied with his theories, he occasionally makes a judicious remark. Thus, on Romans 11.27:

> The words, "When I shall take away their sins" are not in Isaias, but either have been added by the Apostle or have been taken from other prophets.[3]

Another observation, which indicates some knowledge of the Hebrew language, is his interlinear gloss on Romans 15.13:

[1] F. 119. [2] F. 119, 123. [3] F. 263; cf. g. 43.

In virtute spiritus sancti, i.e., per virtutem spiritus sancti; hebraica locutio quae equivocum habet hane prepositionem "in." [1]

That is, Paul would have allowed to appear in Greek the instrumental meaning of the Hebrew *beth*. This erudition did not come to maturity, but it is interesting to see Luther entering upon a path which was later to be followed by so many, not without some danger.

4. Luther on St. Paul's Citations of the Old Testament

Incidentally we have just met with the delicate question of Paul's citations of the Old Testament. Luther does not seem to have any very definite criterion. At times he expresses himself as a rigid conservative. For instance, to reconcile the divergencies of the text of Paul (who quotes from the Septuagint) with the Hebrew, he maintains that both are right:

Consequently, both texts have the same thing, but the LXX express the cause, the Hebrew the effect, as is very often the case.[2]

I do not know where he found this rule or what examples he might have given. Else-

[1] F.g. 131: "in the power of the Holy Ghost." that is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; the Hebrew locution corresponding to "in" is equivocal.
[2] F. 238.

where he expresses himself like a modern critic:

> (The Apostle) cites the Bible as it was possessed by those to whom he was writing.[1]

In certain cases Paul seems to depart freely from both texts. Then Luther very justly holds that the Apostle has a right to argue from the Scriptures without confining himself to the literal sense. On "Who shall ascend into heaven" (Rom. 10.6) he remarks:

> Moses does not use the words in this sense in Deuteronomy 30, but the Apostle under the Spirit's influence draws out the meat of them with true insight, teaching us as by a powerful argument that the whole Bible deals everywhere with Christ alone, when its inner meaning is perceived, although on the surface it speaks of other matters—figures and shadows.[2]

In this case, then, the Apostle would have argued from the spiritual sense. Father Cornely interprets the passage still more freely, maintaining that St. Paul simply uses the biblical terms without precise argumentation.

Elsewhere Luther himself offers another solution. On Romans 4.17, instead of simply noting that the words "before God whom he believed" are not part of the citation from Genesis (as he reads *credidisti* and does not consult the Greek, Lefèvre having neglected

[1] F.g. 30. [2] F. 240.

to do so), he supposes that Paul borrows from other Jewish books:

> This is not in the Hebrew, but it is usefully added to confute the Jews, from whose books the Apostle doubtless took it.[1]

This solution is again very conservative if these books of the Jews were regarded as inspired, but we have already seen, in citing his remarks on Romans 11.27, that he thought that the Apostle had a right to add his own words. Lefèvre had called his attention to the freedom of some of St. Paul's citations (on Rom. 4.17).

5. The Literal and the Spiritual Senses of Scripture

We have seen Luther admit in the most sweeping fashion the spiritual sense of Scripture. He was then naturally led on to allegorical explanations. In fact, he does use allegory much more than St. Thomas. It was perhaps a matter of tradition and habit; or perhaps he wished to preserve, in the modern exegesis which he was inaugurating, that *spirit* whose rights he championed.

His allegories are not very remarkable. Paul begins with the Romans, who were the head of the world, as John baptized Christ beginning with the head; the Epistle of Paul

[1] F. 42.

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is then like a river of Paradise or the Nile, etc.[1] Moses fleeing from the rod changed into a serpent, is a figure of the man to whom the law is promulgated.[2] Christ is named Hermon, because he was anathematized by the Jews.[3] The Jews coming to Christ at the end of time are prefigured by the brethren of Joseph.[4] Those who do not for the sake of higher service consent to abandon their present occupations, refuse to lend an ass to the Savior, etc.[5]

Luther's inclination to look at everything from the moral point of view prevents him at times from paying sufficient attention to the literal meaning. The expression of Romans 2.22, *sacrilegium facis* (thou committest sacrilege), is explained in the interlinear gloss:

> By polluting and violating, by evil desires, the true temple of God which is the heart.[6]

It is not that he does not know what the meaning of ἱεροσυλεῖς is; in the *Scholia* he interprets it:

> Sacrilege is the pillage and robbery from a temple.

But he immediately launches into two moral meanings to which he adds that of his gloss. This is not the work of an innovator. Nor

[1] F. 17.
[2] F. 192.
[3] F. 216.
[4] F. 262.
[5] F. 287.
[6] F.g. 23.

could one do Luther the honor to consider him as a pioneer in historical exegesis. Scholars of the past century have discussed the reason of St. Paul's addressing to Rome a treatise on the relation of the Gospel to the Law. They asked whether the Romans were imbued with judaizing errors, and they studied the relations between Jews and Gentiles. But the questions had long been put. Marcion dealt with them; St. Thomas had given them thought. They never occurred to Luther, until he came to the second of Romans, which speaks of the strong and the weak. Brought thus face to face with them, he simply notes that everything the Apostle says is aimed at the Jewish superstition, which certain false apostles taught concerning foods and days.[1]

Naturally Luther contemplates with sympathy the freedom of mind shown by the Apostle; but the abuses with which Paul had to deal inspired less interest than did those of his own times; the Rome of Nero could not take his mind away from the Rome of Leo.

However, he felt very keenly the difficulty presented by the sixteenth chapter of Romans, which has so much interested modern scholars. How did Paul, who had never been in Rome, know so many people there? All his Asiatic friends would seem to have gone thither before him. Luther did not, as has been claimed, raise this question; and the

[1] F. 313; cf. g. on Rom. 16.17.

solution, which he gives as personal, is clearly bad:

> Therefore I meanwhile in my own mind will to think this, that these persons are all Achaians and Corinthians, whom the Apostle commends to them, that they may know and greet them.[1]

So the Romans are invited to salute friends of the Apostles who remain in Greece. The reason would be the Hebrew custom of placing in the Synagogues the names of all Jews in tribal order. Even if this custom had been constant, it would throw no light on the problem.

[1] F. 139.

CHAPTER II

THE PERSONALITY OF THE COMMENTATOR

1. The Influence of the Commentator Upon the Commentary

What century has not resounded, in countries whose people were capable of self-expression, with the old lamentation over the attacks and the victories of evil within us? Plato made Socrates describe the astonishment of reason in presence of the unleashed wild beasts of the lower appetite.[1] St. Paul had figured in the anguish of his double self all humanity involved in sin. Manichaeism, a long-lived and vigorous heresy, assigned to evil an almost divine position; it transported the conflict into the spheres of the deity.

Luther was one of the sons of Adam who suffered most painfully from the attacks of what he called concupiscence: leanings to pride, anger, the pleasures of sense. He could not, like the platonic Gnostics, attribute this domestic hostility to the fall of the spirit into matter, still less see in it the eternal battle of two divine principles.

He thought that St. Paul furnished him

[1] *Republic.*

with the desired explanation; concupiscence was the heritage of man from his first sinful father; it was original sin.

St. Paul taught, indeed, that the disobedience of Adam had brought into the world a sin which is transmitted from father to son, and the punishment of which is death. But he thought of this situation only by way of comparison with the state of the first man, a happy state from which the human race had been degraded. He did not teach that we have inherited a nature irremediably vitiated. An important group of theologians (and it may be said that there is no Catholic theologian today who does not belong to it) explained that original sin, transmitted to all, is only the privation of this privilege, called original justice, granted to our first parents. Nature is really lowered and despoiled of the gifts which God had destined for it, but it is not thereby deprived of free-will. And St. Paul had shown admirably that the goodness of God, frustrated at first in its designs, had afterwards realized them in Christ with more richness. Through Christ, through Baptism received in Christ's name—an external act by which the believer subjects himself to Christ and is incorporated into Him, sin loses its hold. The Christian is dead to sin; he is freed, purified from the original stain. He retains, indeed, his nature, composed of a reasonable soul, and a body the tendencies of

which are too often in conflict with the soul's aspirations. In this respect his situation is not changed. What was called concupiscence before Baptism may still be so termed. But henceforth the spirit of Jesus dwells in His faithful disciple and causes him to live with His life; the struggle is no longer between powerless reason and the flesh,—pride, anger, luxury,—which dragged it into sin; it is between the spirit which is in him, a principle of action which theologians called grace, and these same evil tendencies. Moreover, an assurance of victory is given. The Christian must have full confidence. If God has granted him such means of salvation, it shows that He wishes to save him.

This is, briefly stated, the economy of salvation to which Luther opposes his precise negation already in 1515. The new idea of his *Commentary* on the Epistle to the Romans, Denifle and Ficker agree, is the identification of concupiscence with sin. This fundamental idea of the system of theology, which was taking shape, had not been expressed in his earlier writings, but it is asserted at the beginning of the *Commentary* and runs all through it. The sinfulness of concupiscence is, he maintains, the principal doctrine of St. Paul; the Apostle's chief aim is to establish the necessity of Christ's righteousness for the destruction of sin by making all recognize that they are sinners.

The main point and intention of the Apostle in this Epistle is to destroy self-righteousness and reliance on one's own wisdom, and to construct, increase, and magnify sins and folly, which were not (i. e., not thought to be, on account of our good opinion of ourselves); his purpose, I say, is to make us realize that sins still exist, that they are great and numerous, and thus to bring home to us our need of Christ and His righteousness.[1]

In the gloss, he uses the plural *sins*, but in the *Scholia* the singular is employed:

The supreme object of this Epistle is to destroy, etc. . . . and to plant and constitute and magnify sin (although this was not or was not thought to be).[2]

We shall see more clearly, as we proceed, that this sin is concupiscence. However one scrutinizes Luther's propositions, he will come to this fundamental point of his system: concupiscence is a sin of our nature which nothing removes. Neither Baptism nor Penance change anything. We are sinners and must acknowledge it. Therein lies our only hope of salvation. If we are very humble, if we confess our sin, if we have confidence in Christ, and if nevertheless we resign ourselves willingly to damnation, in case it should be God's will, we shall be saved.

[1] F.g., p. 1. [2] F. 1.

There is still some indecision as regards the proposed remedy. Most frequently it is humility, which is always on Luther's lips, and already it is faith, understood as personal assurance of salvation. But what is settled from the start, and what is affirmed with ever-growing confidence, is the irremediable corruption of our nature. We are sinners, hence we do not possess righteousness, nor anything to make us agreeable to God. By the sin of Adam it was human nature itself that was vitiated. It became incapable of doing good. If it tries, it but adds presumption and insolence to its powerlessness. To endeavor to perform good works is to sin more and more irremissibly.

This radical pessimism must lead to despair. Luther understands the danger and he offers deliverance. To those who are humble God does not impute sin. Sin remains, the fundamental thesis requires this, but it is not an obstacle to salvation. Every sin is, however, essentially mortal, so contaminated is the source of our actions. But our sin is imputed by God as venial. What is more, to those who believe, faith is imputed as righteousness. We are then sinners but, at the same time, if we have faith, we are righteous, although, strictly speaking, only in hope. Righteousness will not be conferred on us until the moment of our death. Righteous and sinners—a paradoxical antithesis, which

delights Luther and which he develops with endless variations.

He triumphs, for he possesses at last the means to crush pride, to make man withdraw into the mire of his sin to bring him back into the way of salvation. Yes, he is deeply convinced that all theology was astray, that men were deceiving themselves in seeking salvation by good works, that they must restore to God all His rights, abase themselves before Him as the only righteous One, yield themselves to Him as alone able to perform good actions in them, render Him glory by going with docility to the goal to which He leads them, blessedness or damnation.

Human liberty disappeared—even human activity—in a pessimistic quietism.

Now it is certain that the source of this false mysticism is not in St. Paul. A few belated orthodox Lutherans still maintain that it is; but more and more numerous in German universities are the professors of theology, that is to say, of Biblical exegesis, who no longer seek to find Lutheranism in the Epistle to the Romans or any part of the Scriptures. It is true that both Testaments proclaim that man is a sinner. This is a confession which mystics have ever found sweet, but without denying that God gives grace when He pardons. One of the Psalms congratulates the man to whom God "does not impute his sin." But it was understood

that God's attitude means that the sin is forgiven. And if St. Paul repeats after Genesis that the faith of Abraham "was reputed to him unto justice," it is but an expression cited in passing, such as it stands, which must be understood according to the general spirit of his teaching. Now if the modern rationalistic critics considered themselves authorized to address reproaches to St. Paul, they would say that he exaggerated the splendor of the gift of God in the Christian soul. For him Christian life, far from being a prolongation of the life of sin, is such an evident transformation that more than one non-Catholic exegete qualifies it as a magical effect. This is assuredly going too far, or rather it is putting it badly; but the qualification allows us to measure the distance between an unbiased interpretation and that which Luther imposed upon his followers.

The question now arises more definitely: How did this doctrine, the novelty of which no one should doubt, take possession of Luther's mind and inspire such absolute conviction?

There exists Luther's own explanation, given towards the end of his life, in 1545, in the preface of his Latin works. Here he describes with complacency the manner in which God gave him light:

> I was burning with the desire to understand St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Ardor was

not lacking, but I was ever coming in collision with this expression of the first chapter of Romans, "In the Gospel is revealed the justice of God." [1]

I hated the words "justice of God," which I had learned from the usage of all doctors to understand in the philosophical sense. I thought it meant what they call formal or active justice, that with which God is just when He punishes sinners and the unrighteous.

Notwithstanding the irreproachable character of my life as a monk, I felt that I was a sinner before God and my conscience was uneasy. Were the satisfactions which I offered God sufficient to appease Him? I had no certitude that they were. So I did not love this just and avenging God. . . . I was troubled in conscience and I ceaselessly applied myself to this passage of Paul in the keen desire to know what it meant.

I thus meditated day and night, until God had pity on me. I gave attention to the connection of these words: "The justice of God is revealed in the Gospel, as it is written: the just man shall live by faith," and I perceived that the justice of God must be understood of the justice which God imparts, that by which the just man lives, that is to say, faith. The meaning of the sentence was then: The justice which is revealed in the Gospel is passive justice, by

[1] The Vulgate term *justitia* is rendered by the word *justice* in the Douay Bible; and in Catholic theological works *justice* is used frequently in the broad sense of *righteousness*.—Translator's note.

which God in His mercy justifies us by means of faith. At once I felt myself born to a new life. It seemed to me that the gate of Paradise opened wide before me.

Henceforth Scripture took on a new aspect. . . . I next read *De Spiritu et litera.* Contrary to my expectation I found that Augustine understood, like myself, by the justice of God that with which God clothes us when He justifies us.

Would that Luther had made no other discovery!

We know through the labors of Father Denifle that before the time when Luther wrote, sixty-six Latin commentators, in works printed or in manuscript, had given the words in Romans 1.17 this interpretation. And if any one (several modern writers have done so) took the words "justice of God" to mean not the justice communicated but the divine attribute of justice, absolutely no one had ever understood it of the avenging justice. Where then did Luther get the opinion of "all the doctors"? And if he was mistaken about this point, he may well have been mistaken in a different way when he attributed to himself an interpretation which he would only subsequently have found in Augustine.

The facts are so clear that one might ask if Father Denifle had not taken too much trouble to establish them. But it is doubtful

whether Luther's admirers would have laid down their arms in presence of a less convincing demonstration of the levity with which the Reformer related his personal history. We still read in Mr. Ficker: "It matters little for our appreciation of Luther that nearly all (?) previous commentators understood Romans 1.17 in the same way, as Father Denifle has proved with meritorious exactitude and wealth of evidence. The new (!) interpretation impressed him only when read in Augustine. And that is on the whole what is decisive." [1] It is, then, Paul interpreted by Augustine who would have made an impression on Luther. But Mr. Ficker knows that the dominant idea of the system came before he learned it from Augustine. What suggested it?

Victorious concupiscence, Father Denifle has answered. When Luther entered the cloister with the purpose of sanctifying himself, he was too much inbued with the teachings of Occam. He fancied that holiness depended exclusively on his own efforts. This notion, which he held in good faith, had to give way. Concupiscence proved too strong for him; he concluded that it was invincible and consequently that it was impossible to keep the commandments.

This invincible concupiscence he identified with original sin, and he sought salvation,

[1] F. 79.

which he was unwilling to give up, only in the righteousness of Christ.

This view of Father Denifle attributes nearly everything in the evolution of Luther's system to experience; he makes no allowance, as far as I can see, for the direct influence of St. Paul upon it. Under the discouragement of a fall, Luther framed a theory which would help him out of his difficulties. Father Denifle notes the time when the identification of concupiscence and original sin appears; he exposes Luther's state of soul, and, concurrently, the variations of his doctrine. He leaves St. Paul out of the question.

Mr. Jundt likewise insists upon Luther's moral experience. He excludes, however, as might have been expected, the notion that Luther had sinned; he even identifies Luther's experience with that of Paul. His last word is that: "this system rests upon the data of individual experience of the believer, confirmed and completed by the testimony of Holy Writ." [1] This places Scripture in an important, though secondary place; and such it certainly had in Luther's mind.

I believe, for my own part, that Mr. Jundt's formula would be exact if only it added some indication of the fact that it was not Holy Writ itself, but Holy Writ as it was understood by Luther, that confirmed his in-

[1] L. 1, p. 156.

dividual experience. Lutheranism issued from its author's personal dispositions, and from his misinterpretation of the Epistle to the Romans.

It is not merely by logical deduction that both Catholic and Protestant theologians have recognized the important part played by individual experience in Luther's doctrine. His passionate personality reveals itself frequently. Later on he will speak of adopting some point to annoy the Pope. But already in the *Commentary* he writes:

> God so acts in all the Saints, that He causes them to do with their own will what they desire supremely. Philosophers wonder at the contrariety, and men do not understand. Therefore, I have said that it will never be known except by practice and experience.

This is what mystics teach concerning supernatural states; but he adds:

> If in law, which is the teaching of a shadowy justice, practice is necessary, how much more in theology![1]

Here we see the intention to regulate theology according to personal experience, which means according to the disposition of the heart and the mind, in the moral and in the intellectual order.

[1] F. 271.

2. The Moral Dispositions of Luther

What strikes one most in the moral dispositions of Luther is, as Father Denifle has well seen, the constant and tormenting preoccupation about concupiscence, the notion he has of its power, of its ceaselessly renewed forces. When he takes up this subject his style becomes passionate, reflecting the vicissitudes of a tragic conflict.

Already in 1514, in his Dictation on the Psalter, Luther wrote:

> The passion of anger, pride, lust, when absent, is easily presumed to be conquered by those lacking experience; but when it is present, it is felt to be most powerful, even insuperable, as experience teaches. And thus humbled and weakened, they have cried unto the Lord, despairing of self, hoping in God.[1]

In the *Commentary* he identifies concupiscence with original sin and this allows him to paint it in most somber colors, reproducing, as he believes, the thought of St. Paul and the Fathers. He ends his analysis with the most fearful images of mythology:

> This is the many-headed hydra, the exceedingly pertinacious monster, with which we fight in the Lernaean marshes of this life until death. It is Cerberus, the unrestrainable barker, and the insuperable Antheus sent down upon earth.[2]

[1] Cited by Denifle-Paquier, II., 396. [2] F. 271.

Apparently it did not occur to him that it was more powerful in himself than in others, or that it was humiliating. He defies other theologians to overcome it, applying to them the term "Sautheologen." They are invited to consider themselves and their own condition.

"The very silly swine who hold this view should be warned, brought to shame and repentance, at least by their own experience. Because, whether they will it or not, they feel in themselves evil desires. Here then I say: Try hard, I beg! Be men! With all your might so act that there may be no such concupiscence in you. Endeavor to put in practice what you say, that God can be loved naturally, without grace. If you are without concupiscence, we believe you. But if you live in and with it, you no longer fulfil the law. For, indeed, the law says: "Thou shalt not covet," but thou shalt love God. Can one who covets and loves other things, really love God? But this concupiscence is ever in us; consequently, we never have the love of God, unless it be begun by grace,[1] etc.

This is not the place to show that the conclusion is not legitimate. Theologians could answer that to feel concupiscence is not to yield to it, not to entertain desires condemned by the law. Luther knew of this distinction,

[1] F. 110.

and he could not give it up entirely; he maintains, however, that concupiscence itself is opposed to the law. He repeatedly comes back upon the point. And this opposition of concupiscence to the law seems to us to show decisively that he regarded concupiscence as invincible.

Father Denifle has maintained that, as early as 1515, Luther held that the commandments could not be kept, since concupiscence is invincible. Father Grisar has denied this, because Luther always urged that men should resist concupiscence and keep the commandments; he only meant that concupiscence is ineradicable—a perfectly exact statement.

In favor of his opinion Father Grisar can point to the undeniable fact that in certain places Luther speaks of the impossibility of resisting "without the help of grace." This suggests that with grace one might resist. His immoderate statements elsewhere would be called forth by the fact that the theologians he had in view did not sufficiently acknowledge man's dependence on God's supernatural assistance. But Father Denifle has shown that he defends the same doctrine about the irresistible character of concupiscence in a sermon in which he speaks at the same time of his hearers and of himself—persons who were all baptized and of whom at least a certain number might be considered as under the influence of grace.

Here is the text:

And if God imposes upon us things that are impossible and beyond our strength, nobody is thereby excused . . . consequently, since we are carnal, it is impossible for us to fulfil the law; but Christ came to fulfil alone this law, which it is impossible for us to fulfil (or according to the edition of Weimar, not to break). For what the law could not do, says the Apostle, in that it was vitiated (St. Paul says "made weak") by the flesh. . . . Behold the law is impossible on account of the flesh. . . . By the law is knowledge of sin. For if it be known that by no device of our own and by no help which we can obtain can concupiscence be taken from us, and if this concupiscence is against the law which says: "Thou shalt not covet,"—and indeed we do all know by experience that concupiscence is invincible,—what does there remain for us?[1] etc.

It is strange that, after such a statement, it can still be asked whether, according to Luther, concupiscence is really invincible. He does not teach, indeed, that we are always overcome by it; the grace of Christ may preserve us and we must do everything for God, acting under the inspiration of the purest

[1] Denifle-Paquier, II., 382. Note 1. This sermon which Koestlin assigned to St. Stephen's day, 1514, has been transferred to the following year by Denifle precisely because it reveals the point which is made in the *Commentary on Romans*. Ficker and Jundt admit Denifle's verdict.

charity. Nevertheless, according to the new principles taken rigorously, we always sin mortally even when performing good works. Concupiscence, which is in us, is a mortal sin of its very nature:

As the baptized person or the penitent remains in the weakness of concupiscence, which nevertheless is against the law: "Thou shalt not covet," and indeed mortal, unless the merciful God should refrain from imputing it on account of the cure which has begun [1] . . .

Actual sins being the fruits of this first sin, which is mortal, are themselves mortal, for there is no sin venial in itself:

Hence it follows that no sin is venial of its nature. . . . Therefore we sin when we are doing good, unless God through Christ cover over the imperfections of our action and impute them not; sin then becomes venial by the mercy of God who does not impute it to us [2] . . .

These expressions seem to us stronger than those in which Luther declares concupiscence invincible. It is represented as affecting and infesting everything, giving to all our actions its sinful character, mortally sinful of its nature. If Luther preached resistance to concupiscence, it is a happy contradiction which does him credit as a man, though, to a lesser

[1] F. 322. [2] F. 123.

degree, it discredits him as a logician. We are not here concerned, however, with his contradictions. We are citing his doctrinal pronouncements only as giving an idea of the state of his soul. It may be argued that a preacher who declares concupiscence invincible, has himself given way to it.

We shall not dwell on the other indications of moral delinquency which are alleged by Father Denifle. He may be somewhat severe in dealing with confessions of Luther contained in intimate letters. They bear on points concerning which he was perhaps not without excuse. That his too numerous occupations prevented him from regularly saying his Office and celebrating Mass [1] would be an indication of lukewarmness; but priests did not then say Mass every day, and even now it is not a matter of obligation; the obligation to say the Office was also less strict than it is now. He had pretty strong distractions; sometimes he had finished a Psalm or even the whole Office without having noticed whether he was at the beginning or at the middle of it.[2] But many otherwise good men are not exempt from such weaknesses. One would even judge that he possessed an excellent principle of spiritual life when he writes: "I am absolutely certain, knowing it by my own experience, by yours and by that

[1] Denifle-Paquier, I., 62.
[2] Denifle-Paquier, II., 378.

of everyone whom I have seen in disquiet, that it is the prudence of our own judgment which is the only cause, the only root of all our troubles. For our eye is very evil. . . . And to speak of myself, alas! how many miseries and troubles have been caused and are still caused in me by this evil eye." Father Denifle, who cites these words,[1] cannot help concluding: "That is well said."

The *Commentary* contains so many protestations of complete abandonment to the will of God; it so urgently recommends leaving all to Him, breathing only His goodness and His justice; it contains such oft-repeated and enthusiastic praise of humility, that we can well understand the verdict of Father Grisar, already recorded, that it does not convey the impression of moral corruption in its author. We are not easily convinced that sin and righteousness exist in the same man; we are little inclined to declare sinful a man who loudly proclaims his sin.

It is nevertheless incontestible, as Mr. Ficker remarks, that preoccupation about humility is less noticeable as one advances in the *Commentary*.[2] We shall carefully refrain from suspecting Luther of definite falls, for instance, in the matter of chastity. The sus-

[1] Denifle-Paquier II., 378.

[2] P. LXXXIII: One can hardly read a page till we come to Ch. 12, without meeting the word humility: *for what else but humility does all Scripture teach?* p. 39.

picion would be simply rash. But at any rate the least that can be said of his ardent zeal is that it is bitter and passionate. And to come to a point which is capital, whence came his tendency to discouragement? Later on he used to describe with complacency his despair in the religious life, but he did not explain it by his faults; he claimed that it rose in him notwithstanding heroic efforts to attain sanctity. Father Denifle had brushed away this legend of superhuman mortifications. But despair figures in the *Commentary* as one of the bases of doctrine: a despair caused by sins. It is true that Luther does not speak in his own name, but let us weigh well his terms:

Temptations, or blasphemies extorted by the devil, are first dealt with. In his usual extreme manner he pronounces:

> The more horrible and foul the blasphemy, the more agreeable it is to God if the heart feels that it does not will it, because it did not prefer nor choose it.[1] Frequently and especially in our own times (God) raises up the devil, to cast His elect into horrible sins and domineer over them a long while,—or at least to impede their good resolutions and lead them to do the contrary of what they intended; this He does to make them realize by experience that it is not they who will and run. And nevertheless by all these means He brings

[1] F. 227. So far what Luther says is true.

them out of captivity in an unexpected way, while they are groaning in despair because they will do and actually do so many evil things, and do not actually do nor will to do many things which they will. This comes about "that He may show forth His power and that His name may be proclaimed in all the earth." [1]

Where did Luther get this information: that sin, even mortal sin, may be conducive to salvation—very indirectly!—by the humiliation which it causes, had been taught? But the case is totally different here. It is God who so tries His elect, who brings them into the state of despair from which He saves them. Yes, yes, so it is, Luther concludes, as if his own assertion had particular bearing. And why this divine pedagogy by sin, especially "in our own times," if not because it preluded to the great designs which Luther was already fostering?

However, whether or not the Reformer's discouragement was occasioned by his falls is after all God's secret, and it is not what matters most in our inquiry.

He is not the first who was violently tried by concupiscence. A Saint Vincent Ferrier compares it to a quagmire; he resigned himself to living in its neighborhood, distressed by its fetid odor, though he did not resign himself to live in the mud in order the better to do homage to grace. Many sons of Adam,

[1] F. 228.

even members of religious orders, have given way to evil tendencies. Some have remained vanquished, others have arisen. The former have not claimed to be righteous, the latter have longed to be freed from sin. None have thought it possible for sin and righteousness to coexist in a man. This is what distinguishes Luther's position.

The view Luther adopted might be well explained as the solution offered by pride in presence of a fall. The pride of a monk, who has aspired to holiness, revolts at the fact that, instead of being spiritual, he has proved himself no better than a vulgar sinner. In the case of an ordinary proud man it will be sufficient to deny the gravity of the fault. After all, he will say, it was not a mortal sin. But in the case of a man whose nature is extremely rich and resourceful, if pride is strong enough to assert itself, even when there is an evident sin, the conclusion will be that the temptation to which he succumbed was invincible. If he fall, anybody would have fallen. Nature is so evil. He despairs of doing otherwise; and instead of seeking to recover justice by the humble avowal that he was wrong, that it is his own fault, he gives up righteousness. He settles down in sin, protesting with false humility that this is where he belongs. There is no shame in being like everybody else.

But if this explanation is plausible one can

likewise adopt the hypothesis that sin was not, or at least not frequently, consummated. In certain religious, the very realization that they are subject to an ever-reviving concupiscence may produce the impression of painful surprise. The grace of the beginnings may have been sensible enough to reduce "the flesh" to silence. It was thought conquered. Sin had no right to enter the cloister. Then one day it reappears. It redoubles its attacks. It is more formidable than ever. Has there been a mistake in embracing a religious life? There is never lacking an experienced spiritual father to teach the novice the difference between the first stings and full consent. But the struggle becomes in time fatiguing and humiliating; concupiscence puts itself forward as impudent as it is indestructible. If good works do not deliver us from this domestic enemy, what is the use of good works? There is grace. But grace, too, is apparently powerless. After confession, which should have restored grace if it had been lost, one is no better than before. One is apt to despair of God's goodness, unless he is very humble.

It is possible that Luther exaggerated the effect which his religious profession was to produce in the soul. "And truly," he wrote in 1533, "I rejoiced at having become such an excellent man, at having, by one act, rendered myself so beautiful and holy. . . . I

admired myself as a being capable of miracles, able to make one mouthful of death and the devil." [1]

This is undoubtedly an exaggeration. Father Denifle has demonstrated that the teaching of the Middle Ages was not responsible for it. But how could one who was so extreme in everything fail to exaggerate, in the beginning, the graces of the religious life or the sensible effect of Christian grace? We know, from the evidence of the *Commentary*, how much he exaggerated in those days the grace of the Sacrament of Penance:

> Hence I was so stupid as not to be able to understand that I should esteem myself a sinner like others and prefer myself to no one when, with contrition, I had made my confession; for then I thought everything removed and done away with, even within.[2]

Again I have no trouble to believe him when he says that he exaggerated the action of temptations in his soul:

> As a monk I thought salvation impossible when I felt the concupiscence of the flesh, that is, an evil movement, whether of lust or of anger or of envy, against a brother, etc. I tried many things, I went to confession every day, etc. But nothing gave me relief because the concupiscence of the flesh always came back. Therefore I could not rest, but was ever tor-

[1] Jundt, p. 45. [2] F. 109.

mented by these thoughts: "Thou hast committed this or that sin," or again, "Thou art under the domination of envy, impatience," etc. "It is then in vain that thou hast entered into this state of life, and all thy good works are useless." [1]

In such a case scruples may lead to despair, just as surely as actual sins, especially when the victim is not humble and has had too much reliance on his own efforts. This is what happened in the case of Luther, if we may accept the testimony of a letter dating from the same time as the *Commentary*, at a moment when this error had given rise to an extreme reaction:

In our day there is a great temptation to presumption in many souls, particularly in those who are endeavoring with all their strength to be righteous and good; ignoring the justice of God, which is given us in Christ most abundantly and gratuitously, they seek of themselves to act righteously until they may confidently stand before God adorned with virtues and merits, which is impossible. Thou wast while amongst us in this opinion, or rather error; I was myself, and even now I am struggling against such a view, without having yet overcome it.

A man of Luther's temperament was bound to turn about completely and to grapple with

[1] In the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (1535), in Denifle-Paquier, II., 389, note 2.

those who had, he thought, led him into error. And indeed he does not cease his invectives against those whom he calls *justitiarii*. His disillusionment must have been deep and painful. Despair caused by scruples explains less clearly than would more positive infidelities how he came to adopt as a remedy the declaration that he was a sinner; but the hypothesis of scruples cannot be rejected absolutely.

In a word, in the system of Father Denifle, everything unfolds logically. Luther, having become a sinner, decides to acknowledge that he is such and to adapt to the situation a religious doctrine, the starting point of which was invincible concupiscence.

The weak point of this moral evaluation is precisely that it is too logical. Father Denifle, who has followed Luther from contradiction to contradiction, might have credited him with a few more contradictions and with some of those exaggerations which recur so naturally under his pen.

In the hypothesis of scruples, bringing on discouragement, one must explain how Luther, already inclined to confuse concupiscence and sin, came to a definite assertion of their identity.

Besides, both in the view that Luther's doctrine was occasioned by his sin and in the view that it grew out of scruples, there would remain the question why he identified concu-

piscence with original sin, or, rather, since theology recognized that concupiscence is an effect of original sin, why he became so certain, contrary to the doctrine of the Church, that this sin is not remitted in Baptism. It is here that he alleges St. Paul. But before weighing his arguments, we must call attention to other dispositions of his mind which inclined him to a new meaning foreign to that of the Apostle—namely, his ability to hold contrary and even contradictory ideas and his lack of moderation.

3. Ability to Hold Contradictory Opinions

It is very true, as Mr. Jundt remarks, that Luther had a passion for the absolute. But when he adds that, "like the Apostle, he had a mind which was all of a piece and whose first need was logic," he is confusing the requirements of a mind formed by Graeco-Roman discipline and that German knack of combining contradictions which Luther installed in the religious order long before it appeared in the philosophy of Hegel and Schelling. His love of reality does not, indeed, exclude a certain headlong logic which goes as far as it can—a logic which allows him, at the end of his reasoning, resignedly to retain contrary, if not contradictory, notions. Theology, which had little by little

assimilated the philosophy of Aristotle, had become accustomed to the distinction of concepts inaugurated by Socrates. This power of clear and definite distinction is the most solid characteristic of the Latin genius, of great value so long as it is exercised on concepts which are not empty but which correspond to things. It is true that the nominalists, regarding concepts as mere creations of reason, multiplied them in an arbitrary way and indulged complacently in the mental exercise of opposing them one to another and bringing them into collision, of analyzing everything in a most rigorous manner. Moreover, they were not satisfied with a consideration of what God had done, but must concern themselves with equal strenuosity about what He might have done. They had departed from the solid ground of realities. Luther energetically brushes aside these spider webs. He means to find man as he is, mind and flesh, instead of a synoptical table of the predicaments, in the order of nature and in the order of grace.

It was, if you like, his stroke of genius to have understood the aspirations of his time. Simplification, a return to common sense, a language which all could understand, that is what is always sure of success with the masses. They understand only later on that the would-be simplifiers have been doing a work of destruction, and that it is self-delusion to

pretend to do away with mysteries while attempting to preserve religion. But in the meanwhile the shock of antitheses is not displeasing, and the masses heartily applaud one who attacks distinctions which they cannot grasp.

If the interlocutors of Socrates, daring and practical, armed with common sense and current ideas—if a Thrasybulus and a Callicles might count on the votes of the Athenians by preferring solid reasons to concepts founded on distinctions, Luther was sure to please a much coarser public, when he attacked the subtleties of scholasticism.

In the *Commentary*, the tendencies of which are ultramystical, one perceives this note, already rationalistic, which would take account only of notions that clearly correspond with realities.

The religious problem, Luther tells us, will not be solved by disputing about the contrary appetites, or about forms which succeed one another in the faculties: man is one, and it is he who is sick. The text is not lacking in savor:

> Hence appears the frivolous and delirious character of the conduct of metaphysical theologians, who dispute about contrary appetites, as to whether they can be in the same subject, and deal with the spirit, that is to say, the reason, as a thing apart, with an absolute, complete and perfect being, and in like manner with

the sensuality or the flesh as another thing complete and absolute, and are made to forget by their absurd fancies that the flesh is the weakness itself, inasmuch as it is the wound of the whole man, whom grace has begun to heal in his spirit or reason.[1]

A house which is being restored is a ruined house, not a ruin and a house.

There is something seductive in the appeal to current notions and to the common sense against the invasion of an artificial dialectics:

Their imagination was noxiously employed when they followed Aristotle in teaching with metaphorical words that virtues and vices inhere in the soul like whiteness in a wall, writing on a tablet, and form in a subject.[2]

In denying the distinction between the soul and its faculties, Luther was very near the denial of grace and charity, which God deposits in them. But let us not anticipate.

A Latin mind might experience the same tendencies to simplification, but it would remain fixed in negation; it would not try, once it had destroyed the supernatural, to get it back by associating contradictory concepts. Luther, however, was disposed to this latter course. It was useless to show that in his system God at the same time wills and does not will evil, that man is at the same time righteous and a sinner. He was triumphant.

[1] F. 180. [2] F. 182.

He had a doctrine which is inaccessible to the stupid. He was intoxicated with antitheses which he pretended to reduce to unity. Here are a few examples, borrowed from his religious doctrines, which testify to the state of his mind. It is not his system which led him into involuntary contradictions; he willingly accepted them:

> They are still unlearned, who remove from God the will of evil, lest they be forced to concede that he sins.[1] . . . This proposition is true: God wills what is evil and sinful, as well as this: God understands what is evil and sinful. . . . These things are true: God wills what is bad, God wills what is good; God does not will what is bad, God does not will what is good.

Evidently, when dealing with the nature of God, our poor little intellect is very much embarrassed. If it is wise, it has no illusions about the insufficiency of its affirmations, but it does its best, not to define God, but to avoid destroying itself by contradictions. For Luther this was the supreme exercise.

This juggling excites the indignation of the honest soul of Father Denifle. He exclaims, "It would make one's hair stand on end," on reading Luther's remark,

> Real chastity is in luxury, and the more filthy the luxury, the more beautiful the chastity.[2]

[1] F. 22.
[2] In 1518, Denifle-Paquier, II., 404, n. 2.

No, it simply makes one smile. The master is exhibiting his dexterity, as he already does in his *Commentary:*

> Therefore, for themselves and in reality they are sinners; for God, however, on account of this confession, they are righteous; they are really sinners, but by the accounting of a merciful God they are righteous; without knowing it, they are righteous and, according to their knowledge, they are unrighteous; sinners in reality, righteous in hope.[1]

What is more, he supports his contradictions by the authority of Aristotle "well understood." It doubtless amused him to accommodate his theory of justification to that of power and act. Only with him it is the same quality which is at the same time in power and in act in the same subject:

> Always a sinner, always a penitent, always righteous.[2]

We know that Renan, a great admirer of German philosophy, was ever more and more prone to associate the affirmation and the negation in two propositions where both are apparently edifying, but are at the same time of such a nature as "to make one's hair stand on end." But Renan was the first to smile at his doctrines and at himself; at least,

[1] F. 105. [2] F. 266 f.

he affected this attitude through deference for the Gallic mind. Luther was terribly serious.

4. Lack of Moderation

Foreign, and even brutally hostile, to the distinction of concepts, Luther's intelligence was absolutely devoid of moderation. Moderation and tact would seem to be other gifts come to us from the Greeks, were they not at the same time natural endowments of the French genius. Luther develops all his passion for the absolute in practical judgments. There is no half way, no compromise, no indulgence. Here again we proceed by examples.

Luther, the author of a movement the most definite result of which is liberty of inquiry, notably exaggerated the domain and the character of obedience. This is one of the most interesting surprises caused by the publication of the *Commentary*. Extreme in everything, Luther began by demanding obedience towards all prelates, towards everybody, and by giving to this obedience the character of theological faith. One has to read his statements to believe this. Theology, he tells us, says that heretics have not the faith because they choose what they believe. The same is true of the disobedient:

> In like manner, the proud man sets himself in opposition in his mind to the commandment

or the counsel of one who rightly warns him for his salvation. Not believing him, he believes nothing and all his faith perishes on account of the stubbornness of his judgment.[1]

Here faith is lost by a refusal to comply with a mere counsel. And Luther was about to erect the whole edifice of the Reformation upon faith alone! It is not a passing exaggeration; he insists and this, precisely, to show that we can be saved only by faith. Heretics claim to believe in Christ, but they do not believe in what is His.

What are they (the objects of faith)? The Church, and every word that proceeds from the mouth of one of the Church's prelates or of a good and holy man, is the word of Christ, who says: "He who hears you hears me." Those consequently who withstanding the Church's prelates, will not hear their word, but follow their own lights, how, I ask, can they believe in Christ?[2]

In a word:

"What is the mouth of God? That of the priest and of the superior![3]

Faith, moreover, extends to interior illuminations. Such being the nature of faith, who can be sure that he really believes? The only resource left is to cast oneself blindly upon humility:

[1] F. 86 [2] F. 88. [3] F. 89.

Since the matter stands thus, we must humble ourselves profoundly. Because, since we cannot know whether we live on every word of God and deny none (God saying many things to us by the superior, many by the brethren, many in the Gospel and the Apostles, many interiorly), we can never know whether we are justified, whether we believe.[1]

So begins the joyous message of Luther, that second Gospel which has given to Christian souls "living faith in a God, who, through Christ, cries out to the unhappy soul, 'I am thy salvation,' and firm confidence that we may rest in God!" [2]

Luther does not stop at a confident doubt; the excess of this obdience must, under penalty of loss of faith, lead to despair; and this is, as a matter of fact, what he demands as an indispensable condition of salvation. To be saved one must renounce all that is good, even salvation. It is not question of that self-abandonment to the will of God which accepts even the sufferings of hell, if God has so decreed. Beyond this point, already near the brink of an abyss where vertigo threatens, the Church does not allow one to go. Luther is not stopped. True love of God requires, he holds, that we resign ourselves to His loss not in a hypothetical, but in a very real way, and with all our heart:

[1] F. 89.
[2] Harnack cited by Denifle-Paquier, II., 369.

Therefore we must fly from good and accept evil, and this, not only in word and without meaning it at heart; but we must in a whole-hearted way profess to be and wish to be, lost and damned.[1] . . .

This is but to imitate Christ! Luther utters this blasphemy at a time when he still thinks himself a submissive son of the Church. He affirms of Christ

that He really and truly offered Himself for eternal damnation to the Father for us.[2]

That settled it. He had ventured upon the leap into the abyss. But he reserved an escape for himself, and on his return he brings confidence with him. The sincere desire of damnation is the means to avoid it:

They are rather damned who flee from damnation.[3]

How, then, was the desire sincere? We do not understand him, we protest; we accuse him of bad faith and of juggling with words. No, it is the philosophy of the absolute. We are evil, there is only one thing to do, and that is to sink into our evil; there we find the goodness of God.

Such disinterested love of God cannot well be satisfied with half-measures. Luther has

[1] F. 220. [2] F. 218. [3] F. 218.

confessed, we have seen, distractions in the recitation of the Divine Office. Is one to be damned for such an offence? Canonists had reassured the conscience by requiring only virtual attention.

A fine pretext for laziness and wickedness![1]

In a really amusing way he puts before us canons and monks who, tranquilized by Canon Law which commands them to "say" or "read" the Office but not to "pray" it, snore on in peace![2]

Such sayings are jests only. But coming from Luther they leave a bitter taste.

Carried away by the idea of pure love he will not suffer anybody to speak of his rights and of justice. It is the duty of princes to see that justice is respected by their subjects; but all, even princes, should be ready to surrender their rights:

The very word "justice" so nauseates me, that I would suffer less to be despoiled of my goods than to hear it. It is, nevertheless, always in the mouth of the jurists.

[1] F. 288.

[2] F. 288: Sed habent nunc juriste pulcram glosam, quia orationes horarias orare non est preceptum, sed "legere" seu "dicere." Sic enim ponderant canonem in verbis ac sic securi stertunt. Some jokes are very long-lived. This one recalls the words of the dean during a storm: "This is no time to say our Office, but to pray to God."

Naturally, that is their function! But what a race they are!

There are no people in the world so simple-minded as the jurists and those who rely on good intentions, or their proud reason . . . All justice is then humility [1] . . .

Since everyone is in the wrong before God, no wrong can be done anyone; nobody is wrong and nobody is right. Let men realize this and then we shall have peace:

Thereby is the cause of contention taken away from all men, etc.[2] . . .

Such excess could not be stayed by texts, even those of Scripture. One should not love oneself at all. Nevertheless, Scripture says we must love our neighbor as ourselves. It would seem, then, obvious that the love of self, proposed as a standard, is legitimate. What can the text mean? That one must cease to love oneself to love one's neighbor! This is said in so many words:

Consequently I believe that, by this precept "as thyself," man is not commanded to love himself, but that by it that love is shown to be vicious by which one in fact loves himself . . . It is a self-concentrated love, from which thou shalt be freed only if thou cease altogether to love thyself, and, forgetful of self, love only thy neighbor.[3]

[1] F. 273. [2] F. 273. [3] F. 337.

Exaggeration, subtlety, misinterpretation. . . . What could be expected of an unbridled mind, which amused itself in paradox as in its proper element?

Luther had only contempt for the simple-minded, *rudiores;* a nickname for those of good intention, *boneintentionarii;* jests for canons who snored so peacefully. His most violent attacks were against philosophers and the *justitiarii,* who are, I think, the representatives of speculative and moral theology. He is resolved to set up, instead of a teaching which is founded upon human reason and aims at establishing human justice, a wholly divine doctrine based on the word of God. He has a mission, although, being still in the Church, he claims that this mission is regular.

We have already spoken of his hostility toward philosophers, especially Aristotle.. The condemnation is without appeal, based upon a deep knowledge of the subject-matter:

> I indeed believe that I owe to the Lord this service of barking against philosophy and urging to the study of Sacred Scripture. For, if anyone without my experience did it, he might be timid or might not be believed. But I, having now studied it for many years, having observed and listened to many, see that it is a study of vanity and of perdition.

The extent of these studies was not very great, as readers of Father Denifle know. But

let us take note of the motive of his condemnation. If he rejects Aristotle, it is not that he prefers Plato to him, as did certain humanists; and he does not think at all of overturning the edifice of Christian theology in order to gain an advantage for experimental study. Nothing is more foreign to his mind than scientific preoccupations. Science, too, nauseates him. He appeals to things themselves in a passage of apocalyptic beauty:

> Behold we value highly the science of the essences, operations and passions of things; and the things themselves are ashamed of, and groan over, their own essences, operations and passions.[1]

Things in St. Paul groan in expectation of the liberty of the children of God. Luther makes of this voice a condemnation of science. The prosopopea is bold and splendid but disquieting for reason; it must sound strange to that part of the modern world which is most insistent on its connection with Luther. And it is not merely things which protest against the study to which men subject them; what is decisive is that the Apostle has condemned philosophy in an absolute way. Always in the absolute!

If, indeed, the Apostle had wished it to be understood that some philosophy was useful and

[1] F. 199.

good, he would not have condemned it absolutely.[1]

Luther did not, however, expect to transform the schools in a day. The advice he gives his pupils is not of irreproachable straightforwardness. Let them study philosophy, but as an error which must be refuted, and in order not to be ignorant of the language of the age:

> Wherefore, I urge you all as strongly as I can to go through these studies quickly, not seeking to establish and defend them, but rather as we study the evil arts, that we may destroy them, and errors. that we may refute them. In like manner, take up this study that we may reject what we learn thereby, or at least that we may understand those with whom it is necessary to converse. For it is time to emancipate ourselves from other pursuits, that we may learn Jesus Christ and Him crucified.[2]

It is then Paul's doctrine which shall replace the theology of the schools, which is too much imbued with philosophy. It must, above all, give a mortal blow to the pernicious teaching of the *justitiarii.*

These latter are not religious whose excessively zealous observances would have disgusted Luther with good works. I meet only once with the word *observantes.* Luther addresses to them the reproach which they have

[1] F. 200, On Col. II., 8. [2] F. 199.

always drawn upon themselves (and sometimes deserved) from those who are more or less lukewarm and relaxed:

> The observant fight among themselves for the love of God, but pay no heed to the precept of charity.[1]

He appears to have been wholly unconcerned about attempts at reformation in his order, whose numbers, indeed, were not considerable enough to draw upon themselves such sweeping and violent attacks. No, the matter is not a quarrel between monks; the whole Church is nearly destroyed. She is the victim of a latent Pelagianism which is held by doctors who themselves are unconscious of the danger. Even the evils of ecclesiastical administration come from it.

> Of this error the essence is Pelagianism. For, although there are at present no professed Pelagians, many are really such in their views, albeit ignorantly.[2]

And again:

> Therefore most absurd and quite favorable to the error of the Pelagians is the common saying: "To one who does his best God infallibly gives grace," which is based on the idea that the "one who does his best" is able to do something. Hence the whole Church is nearly subverted, namely, by confidence in this saying.[3]

[1] F. 305. [2] F. 322. [3] F. 323.

Concerning the famous axiom: "To one who does his best God infallibly gives grace," Father Denifle has said all that is necessary. He recalls that, rightly understood, it supposes the action of what is called actual grace, that is to say, a special divine concursus leading the soul to sanctifying grace. Luther admitted the principle in 1514, consequently just before the composition of his *Commentary*.[1] But what is of more interest, it was in a nominalistic sense that he held it. Now the nominalists too frequently confounded the general concursus of God with the special concursus called actual grace,[2] to such an extent that they did not leave in sufficient relief the doctrine concerning God's salutary action in salvation. Luther who, as we have seen, counted too much at first on his own strength, perceived this fact more or less suddenly in the light of Pauline theology interpreted by St. Augustine. The reaction was violent; he saw everywhere only latent Pelagianism. And it is precisely according to another nominalist principle that he sought a remedy. This seems very strange in truth, but is it not one of the conditions of our mind to use the resources it has at its command? [3]

[1] Denifle-Paquier, II., 397, citing the edition of Weimar, IV., 262, 4.

[2] Denifle-Paquier, III., pp. 166, 170, 171, 183 and 184.

[3] Ficker, p. LXI.: "In terminology and argumentation he is the disciple of Occamian nominalism;

And perhaps a more topical explanation may be suggested.

Luther, trained in nominalist theology, experienced the need of disengaging himself from it only when he felt that it gave too much to nature. That one may love God above all things, with only the powers of nature, is a blasphemy for the Augustinian neophyte, who has measured (and exaggerated) the nature of concupiscence. But there was in the theology of Occam a principle which seemed to give everything to God, the principle, namely, which makes truth dependent upon the good pleasure of God; which allows for the simultaneous existence of contraries, good and evil, and which recognizes in good, in charity itself, no other meritorious value than the free acceptance of God. Did not Occam say explicitly that one can be agreeable to God, accepted by Him and loved, without any supernatural form inherent in the soul? Doubtless, these questions were treated, as usual with Scholasticism, in an abstract way, as pertaining to a possible order, which Almighty God had not established, and with deference to the actual order, in which God really gives grace. But, nevertheless, Occam remarked very characteristically that his opinion is farthest removed from the error

there were there many things which corresponded to his penetrating way of conceiving, to his taste for dash, antithesis, paradoxes."

of Pelagius.[1] And, indeed, is not God thus made freer and salvation more gratuitous? Even if you are clothed with grace, He can refuse to accept your dispositions! And if it pleases Him, He will accept them, even if you are devoid of every supernatural gift! Thus all depends on His free will. For a mind like Luther's, in love with the absolute, would not what was absolutely possible become a fact? Since infused grace was unnecessary, why retain it?

Let us stop before we enter upon a discussion of his system. We are only looking for the dispositions which were to lead to it. Suffice it to say, in conclusion, that a man is badly equipped to react against a doctrine when he knows that doctrine alone, especially if its fundamental concepts are false. How indeed can one get rid of the principles? And it was another disadvantage, especially for a mind so inclined to extreme views, to attach one's self to only one doctor, even though he were the greatest of all.

We here touch upon a very delicate point. St. Augustine is the Doctor of grace. His system is assuredly the system of the Catholic Church. But it is undeniable that at times his expressions are too strong, that he even

[1] Occam, on I Sent. dist. 17, qu. 1 M, cited by Denifle-Paquier, III., 198: Et ita ista opinio maxime recedit ab errore Pelagii, que ponit Deum sic non posse necessitari et non magis gratuitam et liberam Dei acceptionem esse necessriam cuicumque.

struck too hard, and that in his very laudable desire to crush a dangerous heresy he gave a rather unnatural explanation to some texts of the Epistle to the Romans. Gaston Boissier has somewhere raised the question, whether the African writers had not a special temperament of their own. Tertullian, St. Cyprian, and St. Augustine would seem to have upheld what they considered the truth with a certain spirited sort of logic which led the two first into excesses, and Tertullian even into heresy. Once more, a sense of ecclesiastical tradition, a very thorough study of Scripture, all the gifts of nature and of grace, made of Augustine an incomparable Doctor; but precisely on account of his unique genius, he exerts over those who read him alone a sort of fascination, and if they are naturally inclined to exaggerate, they will be apt to set up all his formulas as dogmas, his whole exegesis as truth of faith. Very frequently, with marvelous tact, Augustine himself softens, by a shading or a distinction, what is too strong in an expression. Trouble lost for absolute minds who profess, like Luther, to despise distinctions. After Luther, Jansenius, Baius, and so many Jansenists, wrongly understood Augustine's thoughts, because they failed to interpret certain striking expressions by his doctrine considered as a whole. Father Denifle recognizes very distinctly that Luther supported his system by

an inexact exegesis of St. Augustine, and that he clung to it "as if St. Augustine were the Church, and each of his explanations were infallible." [1]

After all, an Augustinian reaction against the naturalistic tendencies of the Occamists had already achieved results. St. Thomas had adopted, and we may say co-ordinated, the Augustinian doctrine, while he took from its expressions what might be misleading, by the very fact of employing them in his theological construction. In modern times, many have complained that St. Thomas was a too faithful disciple of the Doctor of grace.

But Luther regarded the Thomists, as well as the Scotists, as mere sectaries bent on defending the master through passion,[2] with excessive veneration, heeding words more than the spirit. But was not his own preference for St. Augustine more exclusive from the fact that he was a Hermit of St. Augustine? The glory of the saint, who was claimed as founder, merged with that of his order. When Wimpfeling asserted (in 1509) that St. Augustine had not worn the habit of the Hermits, and cast doubt upon the authen-

[1] Denifle-Paquier, III., p. 106.

[2] F. 165: Simili temeritate aguntur Thomiste, Scotiste etalie secte, qui scripta et verba suorum auctorum ita defendunt, ut spiritum non solum contemnant querere, sed etiam nimio venerationis zelo extinguant, satis arbitrati, si verba tantum teneant etiam sine spiritu.

ticity of two sermons, Luther, feeling the outrage offered his order as a personal affront, assailed Wimpfeling with bitterest invectives: "I would that Wimpfeling, the prattler, the carping impugner of the glory of the Augustinians, had read these two sermons (but it were first necessary that he should have called back his reason, which has gone far away as a result of his stubbornness and jealousy), and that he had put a pair of spectacles before his mole-eyes.[1] . . . Why, then, dost thou, an old man, a raving maggot, accuse Hugh? Why dost thou undertake to correct the Church of God?" [2]

Here we see the Church of God engaged in the little quarrel!

Luther will write later in the *Commentary:*[3]

> With such folly do members of religious communities contend about their patriarchs.

We may then believe that Augustine was particularly dear to Luther as the "founder" of his order. As for St. Thomas' doctrine, that concerned the Thomists.

Had Luther known the Thomistic doctrine, he would probably have judged it too rationalistic, for it was preoccupied with reconciling reason with faith, while he was setting up faith against reason. Although the circumstances, which developed this passion for

[1] Jundt, l. l. p. 65.
[2] Denifle-Paquier, II., 425.
[3] F.g. 80.

mysticism that went to the point of contempt for scholastic theology, are still obscure, one must certainly assign a considerable place to the influence of Tauler. Father Denifle, who is so well acquainted with German mystics, has not been prevented by any fraternal spirit from showing how inconsistent with himself was this great Dominican mystic.[1] Tauler pleased Luther very much as a German; he thought him the author of the *German Theology* which he (Luther) was to publish.[2]

In the golden period of the Middle Ages men were conscious of receiving light by speculative theology and by mysticism; but mysticism reflected theology "as the moon reflects the sun." This comparison did not perhaps do full justice to the very real and precious light which came from mysticism itself. Be this as it may, the partial divorce of the fifteenth century was a great misfortune. With Luther, it is mysticism alone, and a false mysticism, that of quietism, which sets itself up against theology. We shall cite but one text taken from the *Commentary:*

> Then are we capable of His works and counsels, when our counsels cease and our works take rest and we become purely passive in regard to God, both in the matter of our interior and our exterior actions.[3]

[1] Denifle-Paquier, III., 128 ff.
[2] In 1516, cf. Denifle-Paquier, III., 128 and note 2.
[3] F. 203.

Almost immediately afterwards, Luther cites Tauler:

> Of this passivity in regard to God see Tauler, who above all others has lucidly and ably dealt with this matter in the German language.[1]

[1] F. 205.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW DOCTRINE AND THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

1. The Teaching That the Justified Man Lives in Sin the Antithesis of St. Paul's Doctrine Concerning Grace

Luther was not the first monk to vindicate the rights of grace against the encroachments of nature, to attack philosophy in the name of simplicity of faith, to express suspicions about man's judgment, to denounce the peril of trust in self. Had he limited himself to these topics he doubtless would, on account of his tendency to go to excess and of the confusion of his mind, have overstepped the limits of orthodoxy and sought to lead souls in the ways of quietism. Would the Church have intervened? Would he have yielded? Idle questions. What is certain is that his doctrine would have remained in a haze of German mysticism; he would have lacked a clearly affirmed theological doctrine and at the same time a basis for defense. But he came forth from the cloister, proclaiming a doctrine founded upon the Scriptures and destined to replace the traditional sys-

tem, which had grown up under the influence of the disciples of Aristotle. Thus he became at the same time the champion of grace and the herald of truth and of God. The particular portion of Scripture which he presented as his warrant for denouncing the errors of his contemporaries, was the Epistle to the Romans. The *Commentary*, which he gave of it in his Wittenberg lectures of 1515-1516, formulated a well-defined theological doctrine and made clear a plan for self-defense.

In this work the vague feeling of being under the dominion of an invincible concupiscence, becomes the affirmation that Baptism does not efface original sin. Grace ceases to be a reality and Luther is saved from despair by satisfying himself that St. Paul taught that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. As a mystic, he had desperately preached humility, which suffices for everything and is the best guarantee of salvation. He now substitutes for this too negative notion that of faith, a principle of life. This is certainly in St. Paul, though Luther did not yet know what meaning he should attach to the Apostle's term. The last point of his development will be certitude of justification and even of salvation. But in this *Commentary* his notion of faith is still too vague to serve as a basis for certitude. He remains undecided, leaning more towards that incerti-

tude, which the mystic was particularly prone to inculcate.

How did Luther see all this in St. Paul? It is unfortunately hard to say, since he is during a good part of his course feeling his way, and arrives only gradually at clear and definite expressions. This shows that he did not start out with a settled system, which he was ready to force upon St. Paul's words. His hesitation, however, is not the same on all points. Although he insists more and more, even in the course of his *Commentary*, upon the incapacity of human nature and its evil tendencies, it is on this point that we find least contradictions. It is impossible to attain righteousness; one must admit that he is powerless, confess that he lives in sin, and by this avowal solicit mercy. How connect this dreary doctrine with that of the Apostle?

It is the very antithesis of what St. Paul teaches.

The subject of the Epistle to the Romans is, as St. Augustine understood, what we call grace. Its *propositio* is contained in Romans I. 16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel; for it is the power of God unto the salvation of every one who believes, the Jew first, and the Gentile. For therein is revealed the righteousness of God, going from faith to faith, as it is written: But the righteous by faith shall live." The Gospel is a

divine power, acting for the salvation of men, and of all men, provided they believe, that is to say, embrace the doctrine. By that act they ask and receive the gift which is offered them; and it is thus that the righteousness of God is revealed,—revealed in them, since, as a consequence of their faith, it is a principle of life.

There are two parts in the development of this theme: (1) Those who believe are justified in the blood of Jesus and sins are consequently forgiven them; this is justification, (Rom. 3.21-30) which, in itself, assures salvation (Rom. 5.1-11), and is "a power of God unto salvation" according to the theme of Rom. 1.16; (2) Those who are justified live according to the Spirit, who is a certain pledge of salvation (Rom. 6 and 8), and this is Christian life, which is also "a power of God unto salvation."

The passages just cited are, so to speak, the center of the teaching: they are parallel and end with the perspective of salvation. According to the first, sin is remitted; and, nevertheless, according to the others, men still fight against sin or the flesh, which has retained the impress of sin. But the synthesis is found in the idea of the power of God which is exerted in both cases. This power, principle of spiritual life, is at the same time a principle of death for the flesh. One lives in Jesus Christ because he

has received it, and it is what has done away with sin. Now this power of God is precisely, as it is already said in the theme (Rom. 1.17), the righteousness of God, a righteousness which is consequently communicated and which constitutes the state of righteousness. Whatever quibbles there may be, then, about this or that text, on the meaning of "to justify" and of "justification" in a particular passage, it results from the most intimate structure of the Epistle that the righteousness of God given to men is the principle which makes them die to sin, to live unto God in Christ.

Around these fundamental points the other parts of the Epistle group themselves naturally.

If, while keeping exceptions in mind, St. Paul condemns Judaism and heathenism, it is to throw into more striking opposition former times and the Gospel era, the patient tolerance of God and His granted righteousness. The sin of Adam had spread over all mankind; even the situation of the most highly favored was extremely sad. Far from being a remedy, the old law, by multiplying commandments, only increased the number of transgressions. The will found in it no resource; it rather revolted against the precept, abandoning itself to evil. But with Christ all is changed. Because of His blood God pardons all who believe in Him. By faith and

by Baptism,[1] man is transformed, he becomes one with Christ. If by the misdeed of Adam all have been made sinners, by the grace of Christ they are now rendered righteous. The change wrought in the soul is so great that it is compared to death followed by life. There is then in Christians a real principle of life, which is the charity that God has for us, and that is poured forth into our hearts. Paul does not, indeed, use the terms of Aristotle; he does not distinguish the soul from its powers, nor charity, which is a virtue infused into the will, from sanctifying grace, which is grafted in the soul. But he affirms that the Christian is henceforth dead to sin, and, consequently, freed from the law of Moses. And

[1] St. Paul speaks at times as if faith, understood in the broad sense, which implies charity, was the one condition for the granting by God of that divine justice, called grace in modern theological language. This is chiefly when he is combating the pharisaic doctrine of justice acquired by man's own efforts. He speaks in other places as if Baptism were the sole means by which this grace is acquired. Luther, attending only to the former set of utterances, made of Baptism a mere symbol, denying that it had any power to impart grace. The Church reconciles both sets of assertions by maintaining the necessity both of faith and of the Sacrament of Baptism. The justice of God is given to every believer; but every believer must receive Baptism, an exterior rite, conferring the grace, which it signifies, and admitting into the membership of the Church. So essential is this rite that no matter how perfect the inner dispositions of a person may be, he cannot be justified without receiving it, at least by desire, as our Catechism teaches. [Translator's note.]

by law Paul does not mean only the ceremonial part of the old legislation but the whole law, even in its moral enactments, inasmuch as it constituted a distinct dispensation. Bossuet had very well understood this: "It is then that law given to Moses, that holy law of the decalogue, that the Apostle calls a ministry of death, and consequently the letter which kills." [1]

But the Apostle, in declaring that the Mosaic law was abrogated, did not renounce the eternal prescriptions of ethics. He looked upon them as imposed by a new law, the law of the new alliance, the law of charity. Its requirements surpass, indeed, those of the earlier régime, but the Christian is enabled to meet them by obeying the Spirit which animates him. Sin had not given up the struggle. It seems, even as we read St. Paul, that it had some base of operation in the flesh, which fights against the spirit; but sin was no longer the master, it no longer dominated. Man was, all in all, delivered from its power and enabled to enter the service of righteousness (Rom. 6.18).

How did Luther, using St. Paul, arrive at a result so diametrically opposed to this teaching?

The radical vice of his argumentation is a lack of historical sense. He took no account

[1] First Sermon for the feast of Pentecost, according to 2 Cor. 3.7.

of the concrete situation with which the Apostle dealt. All the words of the Epistle were considered to be addressed to himself, an Augustinian monk deeply impressed with the danger and the power of the flesh. He felt intimately all that Paul said of the powerlessness of works; he was only too well convinced of that by his personal experience. How often had he not witnessed that tragic conflict between the will on the one side, and on the other sin, which dwells in the flesh? It is, then, really *sin* that dwells in us. The identification of sin and concupiscence Luther claimed to find in the seventh chapter of Romans, particularly in verses 14-17: "I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I do I know not; for I do not that good which I will, but the evil which I hate that I do. If I do that which I will not, I recognize that the law is good. So now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

Though St. Paul speaks in the first person singular, he is really not dealing with his own experience nor with that of baptized Christians; he speaks of man before his regeneration. This was St. Augustine's first interpretation; during the Pelagian controversy he adopted, as more probable, the view that the Apostle has in mind the regenerated man who is still conscious of his powerlessness to keep God's law without the help of grace.

Luther adopted and distorted this second interpretation of St. Augustine, maintaining that St. Paul represents himself, and spiritual men in general, as still in the state of original sin and powerless.

He accumulates twelve arguments to prove his thesis and they all presuppose the same principle. They would be conclusive only if one had to choose between two classes of men, men completely spiritual and men so completely enslaved by sin that they do not even struggle against it.

Here is the first argument:

> The whole text expressly indicates a groaning under, and a hatred for, the flesh and a love for the good and for law. Now this can in no wise be said of the carnal man, who rather hates the law and scoffs at it and follows the flesh unresistingly.[1]

With much boldness, and not without psychological clearness of vision, Luther asserts that it is a spiritual man who cries out: "But I am carnal" (Rom. 7.14); for this is not the language of one who gives himself up to sin.

A first objection to understanding St. Paul's words as spoken of a Christian under the influence of the Holy Ghost was that such a one could not make the confession of Romans 7.15: "I do not that good which I

[1] F. 169.

will; but the evil which I hate, that I do." The text is formal, and Luther allows that the literal meaning is opposed to his exegesis. Thus to the human understanding do his words sound. But this fact could not prove an obstacle to one who could claim the spirit! The text, then, means nothing more than that the spiritual man does not act with as much ease as he would like, and especially, that he does not practice virtue so well as he would wish. Augustine's distinction between *facere* and *perficere* comes in conveniently to solve the difficulty.[1]

If it be objected that the spiritual man is declared to be at the same time wicked and righteous, Luther simply admits the antimony. He finds support for it in this same text, in which St. Paul speaks of a sinner and which the Commentator understands to refer to the spiritual man:

> Thus there is a "communicatio idiomatum" in virtue of which the same man is spiritual and carnal, righteous and sinful, good and bad. Just as the one person of Christ is at the same time alive and dead.[2] . . .

In fact, Luther has finally his proof that concupiscence is indeed a sin, which remains as sin in the Christian. "Now then it is no

[1] We have already seen that it is opposed to the Greek text.

[2] F. 172.

longer I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7.17). Nothing could be clearer; theologians would not have failed to grasp the point if they had not been so carried away by Aristotle as to miss Paul's teaching:

> Have not then the fallacious metaphysics and philosophy of Aristotle deceived our theologians according to human tradition? They have been misled into thinking that, because sin is abolished by Baptism or Penance, it were absurd for the Apostle to say: but sin that dwelleth in me . . . Consequently sin is in the spiritual man, left there to exercise grace, to humble pride, to repress presumption; and if one does not sedulously try to fight this sin, without doubt he has already within him something that will bring about his damnation, even though he be guilty of no other sin.[1]

The opposition to St. Paul is flagrant: the baptized Christian is still, according to Luther, exposed to damnation. Now the eighth chapter of Romans begins with the words: "There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." In the *Scholia*, so abundant in regard to Romans 7.7 *ff.*, there is not a word concerning this text. In the marginal gloss there is nothing, while in the interlinear gloss the new doctrine is clothed in words which avoid a too pronounced opposition:

[1] F. 178.

There is now then no condemnation, although not no sin, as has been said, because "by the flesh they serve the law of sin."

We have thought it important to place in its setting the text which made such an impression on Luther. Perhaps, according to his experience, he was only inclined to conjecture that sin remains and was fixed in his opinion by the text; it may be, however, that he was already convinced of the survival of sin and that to this text he owed only its identification with original sin. However that may be, it is to these words that he refers us at the moment he defines his theory, after having explained the seven first verses of the fourth chapter of Romans:

It is not question here of sins in deed, word and thought, but of that fuel (fomes) of sin, of which chapter 7 below speaks: "Not I, but sin that dwelleth in me." And in the same place he calls it the "passions of sins," i. e., desires, affections and inclinations to sins, which, he says, produce fruit unto death. There actual sin (to use the term of theologians) is more truly a sin, i. e., the work and fruit of sin, but sin is that very passion, fuel (fomes), and concupiscence or proneness to evil and difficulty in doing good, as below: "I knew not that concupiscence was sin."

It requires coolness or levity to sum up Romans 7.7 *ff.* in the words:

I knew not that concupiscence was sin.

But it must be confessed that this text, which had so impressed Luther, was embarrassing for those who interpreted it of regenerated man. According to the traditional principle of Catholic exegetes, who never sacrifice a recognized truth to what one might personally take to be the meaning of a text, Augustine had maintained energetically that sin is remitted in Baptism. As for this text, he had solved the difficulty by taking the words loosely, conceding that Paul had called concupiscence sin, although not in the proper sense of the term: "The Apostle commands us to check concupiscence, and he does not permit it to reign, and he calls it by the name of sin, because it has its origin in the first sin and because any one consenting to its promptings sins." [1] Elsewhere Augustine had endeavored to give a more precise explanation: "If it be asked, how does this concupiscence of the flesh remain in the regenerate man, in whom there has been remission of all sins . . . to this it is answered, that the concupiscence of the flesh is remitted in Baptism, not that it be not, but that it be not imputed unto sin." [2] This is the pronouncement of a comprehensive mind, which does not lose sight of essential points, and which re-

[1] *Opus imperf. contra Julianum* (429-430), II. C. 226, cited in Denifle-Paquier, III., 30.

[2] *De nupt. et concupisc.* I. C. 25 n. 28, Denifle-Paquier, III., 11 ff.

fuses to be drawn too far by the personal view that St. Paul speaks of concupiscence as sin and as in some way remitted in Baptism. Luther, on the contrary, falls in the way in which he leans: he sees nothing but the identification of sin and concupiscence, and since concupiscence remains, he declares that sin remains also. By a bold falsification, he attributes this opinion to St. Augustine:

But St. Augustine has very well said that "sin (concupiscence) is remitted in Baptism, not that it be not, but that it be not imputed." [1]

[1] F. 109. We see the great importance of this fact. Father Denifle (D.-P. III., 11 ff.) has conclusively shown: 1. that Luther has set forth, under analogous terms, the reverse of Augustine's thought; 2. that he knew perfectly well the true text, which he commented upon in the same way as everybody else in his glosses on Peter Lombard (1510-1511); 3. that he obstinately persisted henceforth in always citing falsely; 4. that Melanchthon completed the falsification. Father Denifle, quoting from the Vatican MS., has not written "concupiscence," the copyist having omitted to add this marginal word. Ficker (o. 1, p. 41) has dared to say that this little word reduces to nothingness the passionate attack of Father Denifle. M. Paquier has very well answered that it changes nothing (III., p. 16). I think that Luther's correction proves that he had reread Augustine. He cannot then be excused on the ground of only having fallen into a mistake of memory. The falsification remains and thus appears more voluntary. If he leaves the two words, it is because *sin = concupiscence.* Would he then have cited Augustine against his own system?

Does the fact that sin remains after Baptism mean that nothing has been changed? Luther does not dare to go so far as that, when commenting on the Pauline texts; but he has found a most ingenious way out of the difficulty, and at the same time he lays the foundation of his whole moral system: sin has not been taken away; and the change that takes place in the soul is not brought about, as scholastics would have it, by a mysterious transformation, but by a more energetic resolution to combat concupiscence. Thus, without appearing to notice it, while seeming to oppose the too human doctrines of philosophers, Luther does away with the supernatural effect, the divine reality produced in the soul baptized in Christ to be born again with Him. All this is given as exegesis of the beginning of this important seventh chapter of Romans, where Paul explains how the Christian is dead to the law. Note well, says Luther with insistence, that it is not sin which is remitted, but that it is man who is dead. And, better to bring home his meaning, he tries every subtlety. This passage is decisive in conveying an idea of his exegesis:

Corollary: The manner of speech of the Apostle and the metaphysical and moral manner are contrary. For the Apostle seeks to convey that man is rather taken away, sin remaining (left over as it were), and that man is re-

moved from sin rather than that sin is removed from man. But man's judgment on the contrary speaks of sin being taken away, the man remaining, and of the removal of stains from man. But the judgment of the Apostle is eminently right and perfectly divine. For thus also does the Scripture (Psalm 80) say: "He removed his back from the burden." It does not say: "He removed the burden from his back." [1]

Let us pass by this childish literalism. Luther considered himself armed, by such means, with a powerful weapon against the *justiciarii*. And he was right.

Father Denifle remarks that in reality the soul does not die in justification, and that it is precisely in the system of Luther that it is not really changed.[2] What did that matter to Luther? He was not disconcerted by contradictions; he even saw in them a divine seal upon his doctrine.[3] And, as to the point which occupies us, he surely was conscious of having found a new principle, that which Protestants still oppose to Catholics, the moral reform of the will, substituted to what they call the magical effect of grace. Luther did not foresee, however, what an intense Pelagianism was to issue from this doctrine; he thought he was fighting the human judgment and metaphysical quibbles:

[1] F. 164.
[2] Denifle-Paquier, III., 319 ff.
[3] Denifle-Paquier, III., 225, 305.

Whence it is clear that the Apostle understands sin to be spiritually removed, that is, the will to sin to be mortified, whereas they claim that the works of sin and evil desires are metaphysically removed, as whiteness from a wall, heat from water.[1]

What theologian pretended that concupiscence was removed by sanctifying grace? But when Luther is in presence of a metaphysical term he gets angry instead of trying to understand it. He imagines that the infusion of charity is a detriment to moral change, which he is of course right in demanding, but which is easier and more complete in one under the influence of grace; and he cries out:

That cursed word "informed" (formatum), which forces men to understand that the soul is, as it were, the same before and after charity, and that it is, as it were, by the accession of a form brought into action, whereas it is necessary that it should be totally mortified and made other, before it puts on charity and works![2]

The last words are deceptive; they should be understood in the light of the new doctrine, that mortification will be complete only at death. It was hard to veil the opposition of this view to Paul's doctrine. Romans 6, which incontestably described the new state, offered more than one hard problem to the

[1] F. 164. [2] F. 164.

new exegesis. When Paul says that Christians are baptized "into the death" (in mortem), united in Baptism to the death of Christ, Luther explains it to mean "for death" (ad mortem), their own death:

That is, they begin to act that they may attain to that death and that goal.[1]

In reality, riddance of sin is deferred till the moment of death. How then understand that one is dead to sin and lives unto God? It is necessary to attenuate the Pauline expressions:

(1) To be dead to sin; (2) but to live for God; (3) to serve by the mind the law of God and by the flesh the law of sin (Rom. 7.25), mean nothing but that we must not consent to concupiscence and to sin, although sin remain. It is the same (4) about sin not dominating, not reigning, but (5) justice reigning, etc.

As regards these last two cases, Luther seems to have a more solid foundation in the text of the Apostle. If sin must no longer have dominion, reign (Rom. 6.12-14), if we are no longer to serve it (Rom. 6.6), it must be that it still exists. It is not the master, but it is there.

To express here my whole thought on the matter, I consider it would be more in conformity with the concept of St. Paul not to

[1] F. 155.

see here a designation of original sin. I know that theologians will be careful not to speak of original sin after Baptism; they will say that it exists only as concupiscence. But if Paul employs the word sin, why not understand it in the proper sense? Luther obstinately refused to make any distinction. He would not have even the semblance of a reason, if it were not said that sin still dwells in man by some sort of function. And there will be no reason for this statement if we understand Romans 7.7 ff., as written concerning unregenerate man. It would be very important, for an altogether exact exegesis, not to define too closely what the Apostle left somewhat vague.

Sin is, according to him, at times original sin, at others it is actual sin; but when it is question, as here, of dominating, reigning, commanding, it is personified, like a being with a separate existence; it is almost a principle of evil, a demon which would seek to establish his empire, by using what is carnal, but not sinful, in us. Sin is ever present and threatening, but from without.

Luther, on the other hand, thinks of it as original sin which remains and he is conscious of departing on this point from the opinion of theologians:

> Things being thus, either I have never understood, or scholastic theologians have not spoken

well enough about sin and grace, who dream of all original sin being taken away as well as actual sin, as if they were things that could be removed in the twinkling of an eye, as darkness by light. Whereas, the ancient Holy Fathers, Augustine, Ambrose, spoke very differently in conformity with Scripture; they (the theologians) speak like Aristotle in his Ethics, who placed sins and righteousness in works, as likewise, their conferring and taking away.[1]

It would be hard to push confusion farther. What had Aristotle to do with the question, and where did he say that sins disappear in a moment? But Luther held to his contrast: on the one side the Scriptures and the Fathers, on the other Aristotle and the theologians.

It is to Scripture that Luther has recourse to prove that we must look upon the existence of original sin as continuing in baptized Christians. He was, indeed, penetrated personally with the sentiment of sin and he appeals to experience; but it was a truth of faith, which the Scriptures taught and which we would have to accept even against the testimony of conscience. This is said from the beginning:

> Even if we recognize no sin in us, we must nevertheless believe that we are sinners. . . . By faith alone must we believe that we are sinners, because it is not manifest to us, nay, we even more often seem to ourselves not guilty.[2]

[1] F. 108. [2] F. 69.

He gives as proof some scriptural texts. The point is so important that he comes back to it in connection with original sin.

> Therefore we are all born, all die in iniquity, i. e., in unrighteousness. . . .

And he accumulates passages of Holy Writ to show that all are in sin. It is useless to indicate each of his twelve arguments. Not one refers to original sin. And that every one should confess himself sinful, no one denied. Luther, at any rate, was fully persuaded that his principal thesis rested on Scripture, and on the Fathers, represented by St. Augustine, whose principal text he had misquoted.

2. Imputed Righteousness Not Found in St. Paul

Sin is a correlative of righteousness. If man is a sinner, if original sin remains in him, he is not really righteous. Conciliation of contradictories cannot go so far as that. Luther acknowledges that this point gave him much preoccupation. How could he call himself a sinner, when confession had taken away his sin? If sin remained, how was he justified? The solution would arouse envy in the most subtle scholastic: sin was "remitted" without being "taken away," except in hope, and, to use other terms, it was not regarded as sin, it was not imputed:

Thus, I contended within myself, not knowing that there is indeed a real remission, though there is no taking away of sin, except in hope, i. e., it is to be taken away, and grace is given, which begins to remove sin, so that it be not now imputed for sin.

Sin is not imputed! An important formula, for it is biblical: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin" (Psalms 32.2). He is now in possession of a text and of a principle that distinguishes him from his opponents, the *justitiarii:*

Their watchword and doctrine is: he is righteous who does this and that; but that of the others (it is question of himself) is: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin.[1]

The consequence was of a nature to cause the boldest to pause: God then was to regard as righteous those who are not? Luther did not recoil from the paradox:

The saints are always intrinsically sinners, therefore they are always extrinsically justified. Hypocrites, on the other hand, are always intrinsically righteous, therefore they are always extrinsically sinners.[2]

To see in this the view of a man of genius, one must admit that genius is not bound by

[1] F. 104. [2] F. 104.

the rules of common sense. Nothing could be more painful than to see Luther entangled in these notions of *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*. Intrinsic should signify the reality which is within man; Luther takes it in this meaning, but he attaches a second to it. It is used in a double sense in the text just quoted. There it signifies (1) In reality, (2) In our own eyes:

> Intrinsically, I say, i. e., as we are in ourselves, in our own eyes, in our own estimation.

And he, the enemy of scholasticism, appeals for the substantiation of his thesis to the "nature of relatives," to the "power and necessity of relation." For those who are justified, the terms are applicable; they are sinners intrinsically, justified *before God and in His reckoning*. But why not say that all are sinners intrinsically? Because the hypocrites (Luther's adversaries, the *justitiarii*) are righteous in their own eyes, consequently *intrinsically* (*!*) *righteous* and then

> by the power and necessity of relation they are extrinsically unrighteous (i. e., in the reckoning of God).[1]

If we set aside this logic, we have the statement that sinners are justified when they acknowledge their sin, that is to say, that hu-

[1] F. 104 and 105.

mility is the cause of justification. Now as Luther does not speak of actual grace, he, the defender of grace, ends in a Pelagian doctrine of justification. It is true that his justification lacks reality.

The contradiction with St. Paul is complete. The Apostle teaches that the Gospel is the manifestation of the justice of God, and (as Luther claimed to be the first to have recognized) not of the divine attribute of justice, but of a justice given to men to justify them. On this point the agreement of tradition was absolute. The exegesis of St. Augustine did not furnish even the appearance of a pretext to depart from it. So Luther long remained faithful to the Catholic formulas. No one would have reproached him with opposing the righteousness of Paul to that of Aristotle. The righteousness of God is gratuitous, it comes from on high, it is not acquired by works.

Nothing, evidently, could be more opposed to the doctrine of Aristotle, who admits that righteousness is acquired by acts. The scholastic theologians had recognized the contradiction. The righteousness we have from God is supernatural; it opens for us the gates of heaven. Without this righteousness one cannot always practice human righteousness, especially in difficult circumstances; but, nevertheless, by performing acts of virtue man acquires a certain habit of righteousness

which helps him to practice it. When the two kinds of righteousness are united (the normal case of a baptized Christian), the supernatural virtue is exercised more easily, thanks to acquired habit, or the habit is more easily acquired. There is in this nothing contrary to St. Paul, who regards Baptism as placing man in the service of righteousness in view of sanctification (Rom. 6.18 *ff.*). But Luther affects to place theologians in the camp of Aristotle, as if they had no notion of a righteousness which comes from God. It is his first great discovery. The opposition between the righteousness of God and that of Aristotle is set forth in connection with Romans 1.17:

> It is different from the righteousness of men, which comes from works. Thus does Aristotle (*3*, Ethics) clearly determine, teaching that righteousness follows and comes from works. But the righteousness of God precedes works and works come from it.[1]

Theologians did not speak otherwise.

When writing the words just quoted, Luther still appeared to say that God's righteousness was given to man, since he performs works which proceed from it (*ex ipsa*). It was the Catholic doctrine, which was then, as it is now, so clear that it is not opportune to insist; so clear that Luther long preserved its

[1] F. 14.

terms. It is, consequently, difficult to determine at just what point of his *Commentary* he passed from real righteousness to righteousness merely imputed. This latter variety is clearly in view, when on the second page of his *Scholia*, he invites the really humble man

to await the bare mercy of God, who reckons him as just and wise.

On the other hand, even after the commentary on chapter 4 of Romans, he still uses Catholic terminology, for instance:

For though we be justified by God and receive grace, we do not receive this grace by our merit, but it is a gift.[1]

It is, however, at the end of his commentary on chapter 3 and in the course of that on chapter 4 that he establishes his doctrine of imputed justice. If the term appears before, it is because his conviction had been arrived at from a first study. When, consequently, he continues to speak like a Catholic theologian, we must often understand him in a particular manner. I do not think that he is rendering witness to the truth by a contradiction when he says at the end of his commentary on chapter 4:

The death of Christ is at the same time the death of sin and His resurrection is the life

[1] F. 149.

of justice, because by His death He satisfies for sin and by His resurrection He confers righteousness upon us. And so His death does not merely signify, but it effects, the remission of sin as a most sufficient satisfaction. And His resurrection is not merely a sacrament of our righteousness, but it also effects it in us, if we believe it, and it is a cause. About this we shall speak more at length below. All this the scholastic theologians call one change: the expulsion of sin and the infusion of grace.[1]

We see that he has not lost sight of his opponents; and we cannot suppose that he intended, so to speak, to set before them a flagrant contradiction in his own new doctrine. Either he wished simply to take note of the thought of scholastics opposed to his own, or, as I think more likely, we must presuppose his system, which does not deny the remission of sins nor the true gift of righteousness, but puts them off to the moment of death. In the passage we have cited Luther does not refer us to a quotation of Augustine, as Ficker thinks,[2] but to an elaborate theory,[3] which is to the effect that we die to sin only once, because we thus die only on the threshold of eternal life.[4] Luther prudently kept this explanation in reserve; otherwise

[1] F. 129 f. on Rom. 4.25.

[2] F. 130, note 2, referring to p. 152, line 28.

[3] Based on a wrong reading which he prefers to that of the Vulgate; see above.

[4] F. 157 f.

one would have to suppose that he was not conscious of the novelty of his doctrine.

If we cannot know at precisely what moment he came to the notion of imputed justice, we can, at least, appreciate the scriptural arguments which decided him.

These arguments are not devoid of cleverness, and his way of interpreting St. Paul is still law for a great many Protestant exegetes.

Instead of understanding "to justify" in the sense of "to make just," he takes it as meaning "to declare just." This was only a first step, because one would think that God would declare just only him who is really such. But already he had determined an intermediate state in which God does not impute sin. Why, in like manner, should He not impute justice? The first time that the term *justificari* presents itself (Rom. 2.13), he understands it: "To be recognized just"; and this is right. Likewise the second time (Rom. 3.4), where it is question of God. But already he gets away from the sense to a notable degree when he takes the justice of God of Romans 3.5 for the justice.

by which He is just and justifies us.

Here it is incontestably a question of the retributive justice of God. And this misunderstanding is not without consequences, because the act, by which we recognize the justice of God, becomes the act by which He

justifies us in the same sense, that is, by accounting us just:

> That (justice of God) our injustice (that is acknowledged and confessed) commends, for it humbles us and casts us down before God and implores His justice, which, being received, we glorify God who bestows it.[1]

These last words sound well enough. One sees how much Luther is embarrassed,—differently from when he spoke of the permanence of sin,—when he tries to get away from the Catholic doctrine concerning grace received. But he does not delay to speak more clearly on the identity of the two justifications, the one active, the other passive:

> By this justifying of God we are justified ourselves, and this passive justification of God, by which He is justified by us, is by God's action our own justification. Because the faith, which justifies His words, He reputes justice, as chapter 4 says.[2]

This time we are enlightened. Luther would have spared himself this disquisition on active and passive justification, if he had not had already in view imputed justice, such as he will establish it in his commentary on Romans 4.

In the meanwhile, he draws back at times under the pressure of the texts. When he

[1] F. 55. [2] F. 65.

puts himself the objection which arises from the Epistle of St. James, from Galatians, chapter 6, from Romans 2.13, he gives the right explanation of Paul's texts. In condemning works, which are incapable of procuring justice, the Apostle distinguished between the dispensation of the law and that of grace. The faithful and infidels may be likened to priests and laymen. The latter may use the formulas of the former and nothing valid is accomplished. On the contrary, priests use them effectively; and so of the man who has the faith,

> by which he is justified and, as it were, ordained, that he may be just for the performance of works of justice.[1]

In the same way, if a monkey became a man, the transformation would be evident. The comparison is surely strong enough! There is, then, still a real righteousness and *works of righteousness.* The moment had not yet come when the Epistle of St. James would be pronounced an Epistle of straw; and certain texts of St. Paul were still correctly understood.

But in the commentary on chapter 4 of Romans the new doctrine is affirmed already in the interlinear gloss:

[2] F. 85.

It was reputed to him by God *unto justice* that thereby he might be just with God. And thus it is not of him who works, but of God who accepts his faith unto justice.

And again:

Who justifies by grace. *The wicked,* i. e., he, who of himself is but wicked, *is reputed* before God,—that is to say, by God *his faith* is gratuitously reputed, *unto justice,* that he may be just before God.[1]

In this fourth chapter, St. Paul speaks of Abraham, the father of believers, the most obvious instance of one who, before the advent of Christ, had attained to the righteousness which Christ was to merit. He does not speak directly of the manner in which Abraham obtained righteousness, nor of the change which must have taken place in his soul at that moment of his justification. The essential point is that Abraham, whose righteousness all admitted, was recognized as righteous by the Scriptures on account of his faith. He did not, consequently, arrive at the righteousness of works (Rom. 4. 1-3). Then Paul, comparing the formula used by Genesis in reference to Abraham and that used by David in the Psalms in reference to the pardoned sinner, shows that they exclude works and suppose that justice comes from God.

[1] F.g. 37.

In Romans 4.3 St. Paul quotes Genesis 15.6: "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto him as righteousness." In Genesis the exact words are: "And he believed Jahweh, and He reckoned it unto him as righteousness." It is almost the same expression of satisfaction that Jahweh has for those who observe the law (Deut. 6.25, 24.13); it is applied to Phineas for an act of zeal (Psalms 105.31). It is in no wise question of the first justification of Abraham, but of the merit of his act of faith, merit such that it is equivalent to a perfect work and is recognized as such by Scripture. Luther and Lutherans, in basing upon this text their system of imputed justice, are going manifestly against its meaning as it stood in Genesis.

Nor is there anything in the doctrine of St. Paul, taken as a whole, which would authorize one to hold that he thought Abraham's faith was regarded as sufficient without righteousness, and that it obtained that God should declare him righteous though he was a sinner. We have sufficiently pointed out that the Epistle to the Romans regards man's death to sin as very real and announces a power of God which really transforms the members of Christ's mystical body, even while they are still on earth. St. Paul has no thought of "imputed" righteousness. And of course, it is a canon of modern criticism

that a phrase, particularly a quoted phrase, be interpreted in the light of the writer's doctrine taken as a whole.

It is in connection with this text of St. Paul that we find the disquisition already spoken of concerning extrinsic justice. Again, nothing could be more contrary to his teaching. It is conceded that the meaning of the words "to justify," "to be justified," is not always the same in the texts, but it is not doubtful that he regards Baptism as the beginning of a life of real holiness. Holiness is nothing but justice (righteousness); they come into existence and they disappear together.

But Luther's stroke of genius must be placed at this point. Into this void of extrinsic justice he has thrown Christ. He is outside of us; but He is our good; much more He dwells in us, and lo! our justice is replaced:

> Therefore I have rightly said that all our good is extrinsic, for it is Christ. As the Apostle says: Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption," all of which are in us only by faith and hope in Him.[1]

Luther may really and in good faith have thought at this period that he was replacing a predicament of Aristotle by the living and

[1] F. 114.

active presence of Christ.[1] What emotion in the following expression:

> Therefore let us say to God: O how glad we are to be empty, that Thou mayest be full in us! I am glad to be weak, that Thy power may dwell in me; a sinner, that Thou mayest be justified in me; foolish, that Thou mayest be my wisdom; unrighteous, that Thou mayest be my righteousness![2]

Many a religious soul in the bosom of Protestantism has thus poured itself out before God. And the words are but an echo of ancient Christian mysticism. One must be emptied of self to draw God into his heart; humility is in its way the cause of grace.

In adding the exaggeration, which makes Christ dwell in a sinful soul, Luther introduces an innovation, which is far from honoring Christ as he claims. Leaving aside reasons or fitness, the Spirit of Christ is truly active in the faithful soul, His grace is a gift which constitutes one righteous: "As by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just" (Rom. 5.19). Luther transcribes this text without paying it the courtesy of a word of comment. His

[1] Denifle blames him rather severely for making of Christ a *quality*, a monstrous thing in scholastic theology. But Luther had no regard for this.

[2] F. 59.

position is taken. He is in possession of a doctrine: sin not imputed, imputed justice.

3. Misinterpretation of St. Paul's Teaching About Faith

But why are some reputed just? To answer the question in the light of the views which Luther has up to this time set forth, we must recur to the mystical teaching that God reputes just those who acknowledge their sinfulness. This solution is often stated, and we have just seen a clear expression of it. Likewise God saves those who yield themselves up to Him with purest love.

But was there not a danger that this love should resemble charity, of which Luther still speaks with praise in his *Commentary* but which might easily become suspect, as eminently a *work?* [1]

As regards humility, if it dug very deep the abyss into which false security sinks, did it not threaten to weaken the soul by discouragement? Now Luther claimed to have found a middle way between false security and despair. He had to indicate in man, outside of humility and of charity, a disposition which inclined God to justification. He finds it in faith. The principal service which the

[1] F. 138: Hence only the "charity of God," which is a most pure affection for God, which alone makes upright of heart, takes away iniquity, extinguishes the enjoyment of our own righteousness.

Epistle to the Romans has rendered Protestantism (very much against its will) was to give faith as the human disposition to which God gratuitously accords justification. This faith may be defined in various ways. Catholic exegesis, and also independent exegesis, sees in it a sincere adhesion to Christianity. It was, in its way, a historical notion; an interior act which must exist at all times, but which in St. Paul is applied to that manifestation of the divine which had been the passion and resurrection of Jesus. It comprised an intellectual act, the adhesion of the mind to the truth proposed, and an act of the will, adhesion to the new life in Jesus.

It is true that theologians, with a view to more precision, had distinguished these two aspects, following the example of Paul himself in the Epistle to the Corinthians where he distinguishes so clearly faith and charity (1 Cor. 13). But to understand faith as St. Paul did, it had to be taken with charity; and Luther would not do so. To understand it with theological precision was to make it a disposition which could not distinguish Christians who are justified from those who are not.

There is always a possibility of employing an ill-defined and vague notion in the most unexpected way. We have seen that Luther confounded faith and obedience, extending the domain of faith even to the counsels of a superior. And if one was to hold as a matter

of faith that he is a sinner, why might he not hold in like manner that he is righteous? This step, which is so important in the history of Protestantism, is taken in the *Commentary*. We find in it a first sketch of faith—confidence.

It is St. Bernard who must serve as intermediary between Luther and his text. After the interlinear gloss (Rom. 8.16):

> *The Holy Spirit himself* given us *giveth testimony* strengthening confidence in God. . . .

Luther notes in the margin:

> For he who confides with strong faith and hope that he is a son of God, is indeed a son of God, since it cannot be done without the Spirit. Hence the blessed Bernard in ser. 1 concerning the annunciation of the Lord.[1]

The text of St. Bernard is reproduced at length in the *Scholia*, to show how the testimony of the spirit is indeed *confidence* of heart. Nevertheless, St. Bernard speaks of a triple testimony of the *faith:* "Thou must believe that thou canst obtain remission of sins only by the indulgence of God; that thou canst have as thy own absolutely no good work, if God does not give it; that thou canst merit eternal life by no work, if he does not

[1] F.g. 73.

give this eternal life freely." [1] These expressions are certainly a strong affirmation of the need of grace. But while formulated for one person only, they assign to faith a general object. And for this reason Luther judges them insufficient.

> That is only a certain beginning, and as a foundation of faith,

of that faith which shall be his, which is complete only when it is at the same time personal confidence which partakes of the nature of faith:

> It is necessary that the Spirit make thee believe this, that by Him sins are forgiven thee. . . .

And this is welded on to the doctrine of the Apostle:

> Thus does the Apostle deem that man is justified by faith (by the positive belief concerning thyself also, not merely concerning the elect, that Christ has died for thy sins and atoned for them).

The second point of St. Bernard is developed in the same way:

[1] Necesse est enim primo omnium credere, quod remissionem peccatorum habere non possis nisi per indulgentiam Dei. Deinde, quod nihil prorsus habere queas boni operis, nisi et hoc dederit ipse. Postremo, quod alternam vitam nullis potes operibus promereri, nisi gratis detur et illa.

It suffices not, until the spirit of truth gives testimony, that thou hast these (merits) by him.

And, finally, it is not enough to believe that God gives eternal life gratuitously:

But it is necessary that thou have the testimony of the Spirit, that thou art to come to it.

One must believe that he is predestined.

Where is the proof that authorizes Luther to transfer Bernard's words from the scale of objective faith to that of personal assurance, preserving the firmness of faith, firmness due to the word of God? In St. Paul.

These three points are clearly manifest in the Apostle. For he says: "Who shall accuse against the elect of God?", which means that we are certain that no sins will accuse us. So of merits: "We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good." So of eternal glory: "I am sure that neither things present nor things to come, etc., shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ." [1]

All this, it is true, is still intimately mingled with the idea that it is humility which renders us pleasing to God; this humility is then, taking it all in all, the ultimate foundation of faith—confidence.

[1] F. 197 f.

But a new notion was set forth, which was constantly to expand its dominion. Luther claimed to lean upon St. Paul. St. Paul had had in view the community of Christians, whose salvation God had prepared and whose organ he was. On the part of God salvation was assured, but the Apostle did not ignore the fact that one might lose the spirit of Christ (Rom. 8.9). Luther applies to himself words spoken of the faithful, he lays claim to the assurance given them, and adds to the legitimate confidence of the Christian the firmness of faith. It was, again, through lack of historical sense.

To this confidence he has given a strange expression, perhaps characteristic of his race: men must hurl themselves upon the truth of God, Who has promised salvation.[1]

Luther could not, however, forget that his main purpose was to attack the false security of the jurists. It is for this that he maintained sin. He stopped, then, before having rounded off his system. We must fear, he tells us, but only to find assurance in this fear itself. It is at the very end of the *Commentary* that he utters a last denunciation against those who are in security and confidence,

which all aspire to with wonderful fury. For thus by fear grace is found; and by grace man

[1] Ergo in veritatem promittentis Dei **audacter** ruat (se transferat de prescientiua terrentis Dei) et salvus et electus erit. F. 214.

is made willing to perform good works, while without he is unwilling.[1]

Such is, let us repeat, the joyful message which Luther had in store for the world. It was only when his doctrine was attacked that he boldly hurled himself upon confidence. Certitude of one's own justification would become the best proof of true Lutheranism. Then the word faith, which was that of Paul, regained all its advantages; faith, and faith only, became the fundamental disposition of man in view of salvation.

* * *

The *Commentary* offers other interesting features. In its moral part, especially from chapter 12 on, the words of the Apostle are scarcely more than a pretext for declamation against abuses. One feels that Luther was ready to attack them and to reform them in his own way. He was in conscious possession of a new religious doctrine which he claimed was based on Scripture, in particular upon the authority of St. Paul. We have endeavored to show how he had come to this conviction, and that it was not without having misinterpreted the thought of the Apostle.

[1] F. 324.

EPILOGUE

Consequences of the New System

Luther rightly denounced heresy as the blindest and most audacious manifestation of pride. Did he not understand, then, that the system of doctrine which was already coordinated in his mind was incompatible with the Church's organization and disturbed the harmony of Christian dogma?

In 1515, Bohemia was still agitated by the convulsions of the Hussites, the most radical of whom were called Picards. Referring to them, he asks: "Are we to support the heresy of the Picards? . . . Must we decide to suppress everything — the churches and their decorations, all fast-days, all feast-days, distinctions of priests, bishops, and religious, their rank, their costumes, their ceremonies observed for so many centuries, do away with all monasteries, foundations, benefices, prebends? This is what they do and what according to them the liberty of the new law calls for." [1]

Luther's reply is "God forbid!" Such a revolution was far from his mind. He asks for changes; he would wish that prelates

[1] F. 11, p. 315.

might take the initiative in diminishing the number of fasts and festivals, shorten the ceremonies, give to the poor rather than lay up treasures for the construction of churches; instead of maintaining, even by war, temporal interests, churchmen should devote themselves to improving morals; they should attach more importance to inner religion than to the pomp of exterior worship. The exemptions of clerics are not bad in themselves; but when asked whereby they deserve them these clerics can only refer to the prayers they mutter, and they get exemptions even from them. "We priests," he says, "claim freedom from the service of men because we are bound to the service of God. We serve neither God nor man. Let us beware; laymen are beginning to open their eyes." [1] But the reform of abuses is all that is necessary.

Luther does not as yet, in the project of reform which he opposes to that of the Picards, seem to suppose that the priesthood is endangered by his plans to secure Christian liberty. The priest is for us, as he was for the ancients, a man who offers sacrifice. So long as he had not made up his mind to suppress the sacrifice of the Mass, Luther allowed what was essential in the priesthood to subsist. But the priest is also the dispenser of the sacraments, especially, after the Eucharist, of the sacrament of Penance. If

[1] F. 11, 299 f.

Penance does not confer grace, what becomes of the power to bind and to loose? Since sins are not loosed in Heaven, the jurisdiction conferred on Peter and the Apostles was without an object, and the ecclesiastical organization was seriously affected.

Dogma was not less affected. The history of the Reformation affords, perhaps, the most striking example of the assistance of the Holy Ghost in the Church, on the one hand, and, on the other, the shortsightedness of the human spirit.

Luther was shocked by the rationalism of theology. Did it not seek to bring divine realities into Aristotle's categories, place grace and charity among the predicaments, speak of them as if they appeared and disappeared in the soul as whiteness on a wall or heat in water? He thought he was abolishing an intermediary between the soul and Christ; or rather he fancied he was doing away by a stroke of his pen with an artificial philosophical entity to unite himself more closely with the Savior. The soul, always sick, is henceforth in the hands of its Healer.

This seductive simplification was, there can be no doubt, the cause of the success of Lutheranism, at least in the case of those whom it drew by its religious character. But while attempting to remove an obstacle to the soul's union with God, Luther was, as a matter of fact, destroying the possibility of such a

union. Scholastics had boldly attempted to understand divine realities as well as they could, and, if it appeared rash to classify them, was it not the noblest task of the human mind to construct a harmonious system, in which the supernatural was conceived as adapted to our weakness in order to raise us up higher? For the rest, whether grace was to be regarded as a second nature, communicated to the soul itself, and charity as a quality of the will, was not altogether a closed question; what was essential was to suppress neither grace nor the love of God, which is according to Jesus Christ everything in religion. Genuine theology had not a whit less horror for Pelagianism than had Luther. It taught that man cannot merit eternal life, or even grace, by the efforts of nature alone; that grace comes only from God; that the dispositions of the soul to receive it must themselves be aroused by help from above. But it believed with St. Paul in the liberality of God, rich in His gifts to those who have recourse to Him. Jesus Christ could not abide in a soul soiled with sin; He came to her with complete pardon, and made her able to respond to His love by clothing her with charity,—the love of friendship, the theologians called it,—which established between Jesus and the soul an intercourse which was altogether favorable to humility, so gratuitous was such an elevation. In making of confi-

dence the sum of all that man experiences in regard to God, Luther did indeed keep religious sentiment at a high level, but he was obliged to despoil man of charity—of which he still speaks enthusiastically in his first writings—and, consequently, to disrupt the divine union. Modern Protestants are fond of applying the term "magical" to Catholicism. And, indeed, the charm was broken,—the charm of the outpourings of the heart, responding to the supreme gift, of the prodigalities for worship which, to go to the root of the matter, created beauty. Luther did not wish to attack mysteries. He even boasted that he was digging deeper into the mystery of evil. But in doing so, he was inflicting cruel wounds upon the mystery of goodness.

Now if reason, which is so frequently rebellious in presence of the mysterious, hesitates, even when it is in revolt, before rejecting a mystery of goodness, because there it catches a glimpse of the proper nature of God, it is absolutely averse to admitting a mystery of evil which would involve wickedness in God. Predestination to damnation as well as to happiness; settled designs of God to leave man in sin, and even to draw him into it in order to damn him more surely,—such dogmas can hardly be reconciled with that personal confidence which each must have in regard to his own salvation. Those who

came under Luther's influence were bound eventually to reject such Lutheran mysteries; that influence was destined to lead men not only to deny the gift of God but everything supernatural.

It must be said, however, that Luther and his followers appealed to moral energy to fight against evil. This appeal supposes, indeed, that we can do something. Human nature, corrupt, deprived of free will, would have had only to let God act. Protestantism and Lutheranism itself have rejected this too logical conclusion. They have often given the spectacle of fine moral virtues. And the more attraction for the supernatural decreased in their communities, the more they gave themselves up to this noble aim. But who does not see that in so doing they were not acting in accordance with the pessimistic mysticism of Luther, his pretended championing of the rights of God?

How unfathomable are the designs of God! or, to speak in a more modern way, what a strange reversal of values!

In 1515, after half a century of official renaissance of the literature and art of the ancients, more than one group of Christians in Catholic countries were slowly drifting into naturalism. Luther, in his cell, was above all struck by the extravagances of luxury, the relaxation of manners, the torpor of the clergy. High standards of clerical life were

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not, it would seem, so much endangered as in the Middle Ages, from the tenth to the twelfth century. But the peril run by the intelligence of Christians was greater. It is not the place to speak of that matter here. It is well known that even the heads of the Church themselves showed too much favor towards the culture of antiquity, too much indulgence towards those who combined Christian practice with scepticism of thought. Christian religion risked being deprived of its supernatural force. Luther arose, protested, undertook to restore to religion its inner soul.

His moral preaching was only a means of making Jesus to rule—Jesus crucified, once more a conqueror of heathen sensualism. He appealed to faith and would have nothing but faith.

According to human prevision, Christian dogma was to be saved by the Reformation, while Catholic countries would insensibly fall away towards the logical conclusion of the naturalism latent in the Renaissance. And it was precisely the opposite that happened.

In Protestant countries men strove to attain those moral virtues towards which God ever excites us in order to prevent us from perishing, and this effort was directed by the Bible; but from variation to variation they abandoned, especially in intellectual environments, the most important points of the old belief. Jesus, too often, is no longer an ob-

ject of faith among those who venerate the memory of Luther. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, successfully set to work to reform manners according to the evangelical ideal of supernatural morals, and she kept intact the teaching of the Apostles.[1]

[1] The study on the genesis of Lutheranism here translated was published by Father Lagrange in the *Revue Biblique*, 1914-16, in the *Revue Pratique d'Apologétique*, Jan. 1, 1915, and in his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, *Saint Paul, Epître aux Romains*, Paris, Gabalda, 1916. [Translator's note.]

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